"The Echo of Things": Photography in Roviana Lagoon, Solomon Islands

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Abstract

This thesis explores aspects of photography in Roviana lagoon in the western Solomon Islands in the South Pacific. It is based on fieldwork in Roviana lagoon and the capital of the Solomons, Honiara, and on archival research in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The thesis asks what photography is for Roviana people; how it has been used by them; how it is thought to operate as a medium; and how it relates to issues of history and memory. An outline of the history of photographic and other visual representations of New Georgians made by Europeans links illustrations made in the early 1800's, to photographs taken by missionaries in the early 1900's. This is juxtaposed with a history of New Georgian reactions to, and uses of, photography. A consideration of photography as material culture in New Georgia explores its role as a relic and traces its links with attitudes towards the preservation of ancestral skulls and with the practice of headhunting. The development of a range of representational media is discussed in relation to processes of memorialisation. These discussions are then linked to New Georgian ideas about spirits and what animates photographs; the ways in whcih photographic presence is conceived. A detailed examination of one specific violent encounter between New Georgians and British colonial authority in the 1890's traces the links between photography and history. Current attitudes to these events are related to those towards contemporary conflicts in the Solomon Islands, and the use of photographs as cultural history is considered in the light of these arguments. The thesis draws comparisons between New Georgian and Euro-American attitudes towards photography throughout and, in so doing, suggests elements of photography's identity as a medium.

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Introduction

Fractures

In 1998 I visited Roviana lagoon on New Georgia island in the western Solomon Islands (see Plate 1) to carry out some research for an exhibition project I was involved in at the National Museum in the capital Honiara. The exhibition was to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of independence from British rule. I showed Roviana people a small collection of copy-prints of nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs of New Georgia that I had taken with me. My intentions were to use the photographs as a collaborative means of gathering oral histories and biographies, and these accounts would then be used to 'caption' or frame the photographs for the exhibition in Honiara. I was also interested in what peoples' expectations of the photographs were in historical terms; what did people want from the photographs? In one village, Bulelavata, a large crowd gathered in the welcome shade of a large communal cooking hut to look at the prints I handed round. Old men talked about the "*kastom*"[1] displayed in a photograph by Henry Somerville (Plate 2) that was taken during a Royal Navy hydrographic survey of Roviana and nearby Marovo lagoon carried out in 1893-4. The large earrings, shell-valuables, limed hair, and body decorations depicted in the photograph identified it as "*maqomaqo pukerane*", a photograph from 'before'[2]. Although the apparent 'newness' of the copy print, in comparison to the worn condition of the few photographs Bulelavata people possessed, was commented on, they considered it as an object from the past. Some people suggested that it might have been taken "at the time Royalist", a reference to an attack that British carried out against Roviana villages in the late nineteenth century. This was suggested because people noticed the 'crack' in the photograph - the result of a broken glass negative - this was thought to be the result of the photograph itself having been "shot" during the Royalist attack. My discussion of the glass negative was met with indifference. Several older men speculated about how it might be possible to trace the living ancestors of the youths in the photograph by comparing their faces to contemporary people. Middle-aged men were more concerned with the photograph's ability to comment on the present and talked animatedly

[1] *Kastom*, Solomon Islands pijin for "custom", covers a wide range of artefacts, activities, and historical periods.
[2] *Maqomaqo* is the ubiquitous Roviana term for a photograph and *pukerane* is used to refer in a general sense to the time before Christianity.

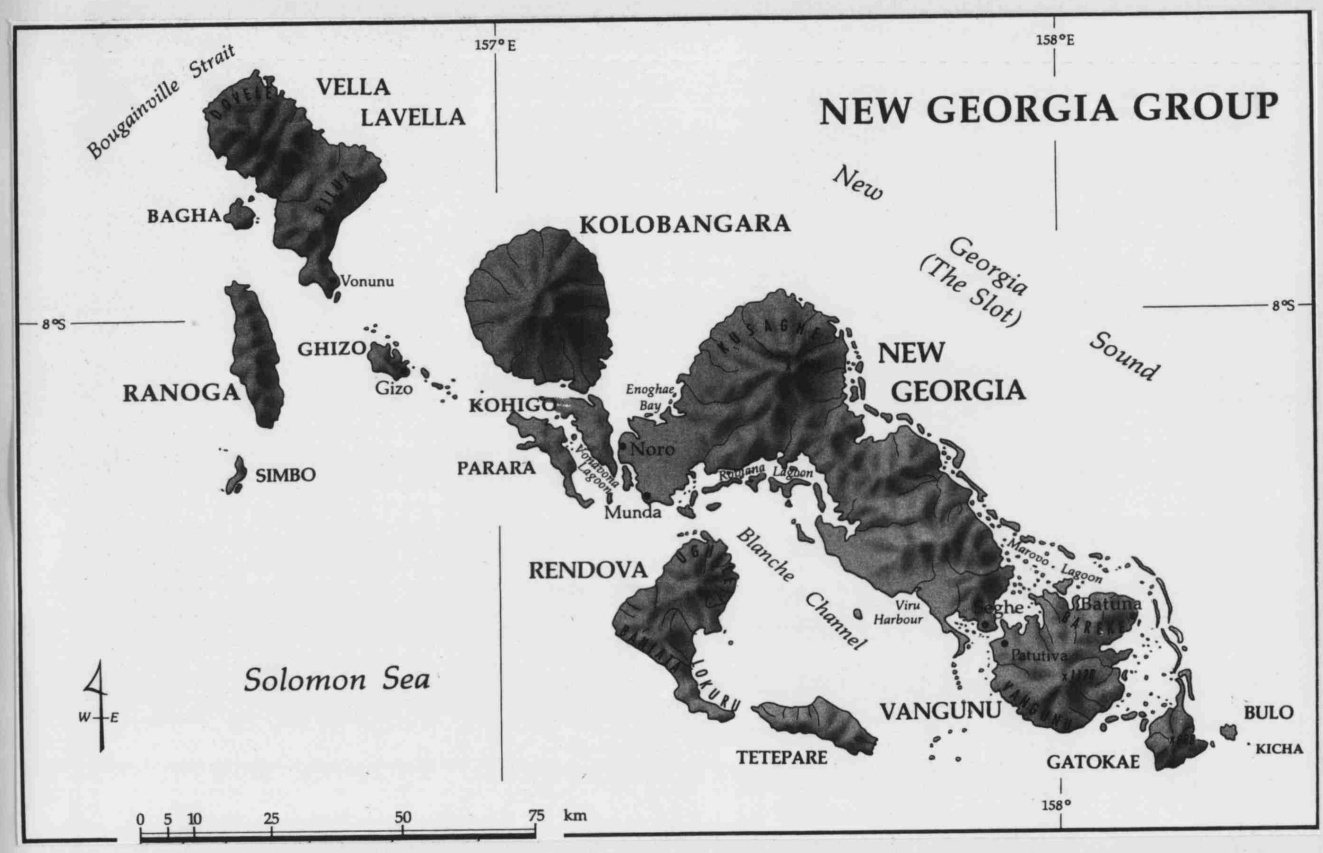

Plate 1 Map of the New Georgia group

about their teenage sons, who had finished school and now hung listlessly around the village avoiding the subsistence work of gardening and fishing.

These teenage boys, whose sunglasses, knotted red bandanas around their heads, and over-sized baggy trousers showed the influence of Reggae and Ragga musical sub-cultures[3], laughed dismissively at the photograph. Yet, in later conversations, out of parental sight, that revolved around photographs of themselves and images cut-out from magazines, they expressed more curiosity. Women, who looked at the photograph in a raucous group together, pointed out that, like Somerville's subjects, teenagers today had an obsession with their physical appearance. Laughing loudly they talked about the "*ruf boys*" of the village and made a series of thinly disguised innuendo's and jokes about teenagers interest in sex. As the photographs were passed from hand to hand they became the subject of many different kinds of conversations, revealing the multiple frames and histories that revolve around each photograph. What is at stake here is not just what is depicted in the photograph, what it might be thought to contain in any fixed historical sense, but what goes on around it, its social life. The photograph is transformed through a process of re-contextualisation, changing "despite its material fixity".[4] In moving beyond its "forensic capacity"[5] this performance of the photograph reveals its ability to be absorbed into other histories and trace a whole range of connections between past and present.

Roviana is an area of New Georgia that runs for some twenty miles along the southern coast of the main island of New Georgia consisting of a large lagoon and barrier islands (Plate 3). Throughout this study I refer to 'Roviana people' and, despite the inevitable difficulties involved with defining a field of some kind, I have chosen to use this term to indicate people living in Roviana and nearby Vona Vona lagoon.[6] The term therefore includes within it people who have moved to Roviana lagoon from other areas of the New Georgia 'group' as a result of marriage, and some people who have moved to

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Reggae and Ragga styles originate in their musical counterparts, but most of their influence in the Solomon Islands comes via Papua New Guinea where the style has been adopted by 'rascal' gangs. One possible area for further study is the connection between ideas of "roots" in reggae, and local notions of *kastom* (see Neuenfeldt 1998)

Thomas 1991

Edwards 2001

See Aswani 2000 for a discussion of the difficulties in discussing a 'Roviana culture'

Plate 3 Map of Roviana Lagoon

Vona Vona lagoon from Roviana. Although there are distinct regional variation within Roviana lagoon, particularly between west and east, most Roviana people would recognise the practices I describe below as "Roviana *kastom*". One of the best descriptions of the environment of the lagoon is that provided by Somerville in 1893-4:

> "we now come to [the New Georgia group's] most striking, and probably unique feature - its barrier island and lagoons...following the southern shore of Main Island [New Georgia] to the eastward...there is a long chain of barrier reef and islands which enclose the Rubiana [Roviana] lagoon. On its inner beach is built the largest settlement in the group, a series of villages holding probably between 3000 and 4000 inhabitants, the chief of which gives its name to the lagoon... to look down upon the lagoon from the summit of any of the hills of the large islands is to have spread before one the strangest and most picturesque scene imaginable. The splendid luxuriant bush close round forms a foreground of the highest interest, edged at the waterline by the white sand, or dark green mangroves of the coast, with perhaps a brown thatched native village standing among its coconut palms, and canoes plying about beyond on the calm water. The middle distance is filled with the lagoon itself, dark blue in the deeps, pale blue in the shallows, light brown over the labyrinthine reefs - a feast of colour"[7]

Although this excerpt suggests a certain colonial desire for a 'commanding view', it does describe the incredible beauty of the lagoon environment (Plates 4 and 5). This study is an exploration of photography in Roviana and is based on fieldwork carried out within the villages that scatter the lagoon. Historically these villages were established in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century's when previously inland populations moved to the coast.[8] Life was, and to a large extent still is, based around the subsistence activities of fishing and gardening. As Edvard Hviding argues for Marovo lagoon, the cultures in Roviana "did not consist of a static society existing more or less in a 'timeless present' before the arrival of Europeans. Shifting alliances, migrations and territorial displacement were common features...prior to European contact."[9] Despite their 'discovery' in 1568 by the

[7] Somerville 1897a p.359-60
[8] See Aswani 2000
[9] Hviding1996 p.101-102

Plate 4 Roviana Lagoon

Plate 5 The mainland of New Georgia

Spaniard Alvaro de Mendaña, who sighted two islands of the New Georgia group,[10] and the likelihood that they were also sighted by the French navigators Bougainville and Surville a hundred years later, it was not until 1787 that a European vessel came within close proximity of the group.[11] For Roviana people there followed a history of increasing contact with Europeans that led to the declaration of the Solomon Islands as a British Protectorate in 1893 and the arrival of firstly traders and then, in 1902, the Methodist Mission. The late 1950's saw the formation of a breakaway movement from the Methodist Church called the Christian Fellowship Church - a highly syncretic movement founded by a local 'prophet' Silas Eto.[12] The majority of Roviana people today belong either to the Methodist church or the Christian Fellowship Church. Independence was granted to the Solomon Islands in 1978 and there were subsequent unsuccessful moves to establish an independent 'western Solomons' state.[13] More recently the ongoing 'ethnic tensions' and the military coup in Honiara in June 2000, have had a considerable impact on people in Roviana. Many refugees from the violence in the capital have moved back, semi-permanently, to Roviana and this has caused a re-surfacing of many persistent problems over land and access to resources. There have also been recent problems with 'authority' and 'law and order' in Roviana. The Solomon Islands has a rapid population growth rate and the expectations of teenagers are not being met by the current state of the economy. For many of them there is little or no desire to pursue the subsistence way of life practiced by their parents. This study tackles issues of photography in relation to current events in Roviana.

This example of the Somerville photograph discussed above, raises a series of questions that have been central to anthropological attempts to understand symbolism and ritual, and which are equally central to any anthropological understandings of photography. In his discussion of symbol, song and dance, Maurice Bloch argues against the tendency for anthropologists to isolate symbols from the ritual process and subject them to formal analysis; for him symbols cannot be understood apart from the communication system in which they are embedded.[14] Applying a linguistic model to ritual practice, Bloch proposes two forces that are at work in its symbolism; the propositional and the illocutionary or performative.[15] The latter increase exponentially with the formalisation of ritual. The implication of

[10] Woodford 1890 p.407
[11] Jackson 1978 p.43
[12] See Harwood 1978
[13] Premdas et al 1983
[14] Bloch 1989 p.19
[15] See also Edwards on the 'illocutionary force' of photographs (2001)

this for any anthropological studies of photography is that photographs are not simply propositions suitable for decoding; they involve both a propositional and an illocutionary force. It is not simply a matter of decoding the meaning in the photographs, but of considering their illocutionary or performative force. In terms of the photographic practices of contemporary Roviana people it may well be practice that expresses cultural inflection as much as any formal properties of the photographs themselves.

Photographs are revealing of wider cultural concerns and Bourdieu proposes that; "the most trivial photograph expresses, apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group."[16] But photographs also reveal fractures, and cannot be taken as straightforward reflections of culture. What is required is an understanding of how they function as a medium in practice; a practice that is both historically and culturally situated. What is needed is an anthropology of the cultural and social use of photographs. This is a study of the social life of photographs in Roviana lagoon that will look at both contemporary photographic practices of Roviana people and their reactions to historical photographs of Roviana made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is an ethnography of photography that demonstrates the need for new approaches to photography in anthropological understandings.

Photographies

The great majority of literature on the photographic representation of other cultures has focused on nineteenth and early twentieth century material produced by colonial regimes,[17] and the same is true of anthropology's self-reflexive interest in its own historical entanglement with photography.[18] Christopher Pinney has argued that photography and anthropology share a 'parallel history' and, while problematising the relationship, has shown how the positivism ascribed to photography in the name of scientific endeavour found fertile ground in the early positivism of the anthropological project.[19] Most writing on colonial photography has treated it as an un-occluded mirror of colonial attitude and, in

[16] Bourdieu 1990 p.6
[17] Green 1984, Alloula 1987, Edwards (ed.) 1992
[18] Edwards (ed.) 1992
[19] Pinney in Edwards (ed.) 1992

focusing solely on a formal critique of the images, it has largely failed to investigate the political complexities and the historically situated practices of production and consumption that are involved in photography's entanglement with other cultures. As well as understanding the historical context of anthropology's involvement with photography, questions about contemporary anthropological approaches to the medium also need to be considered.[20]

The use of photography in fieldwork is one area that usefully reveals some anthropological approaches to the medium, and Kirsten Hastrup's sceptical view of its utility highlights a series of important unanswered questions.[21] Hastrup maintains that, in their failure to capture the "sexual texture" of an Icelandic ram festival, the series of photographs she took of the event "remain a thin description of the happening, while the text allows for a thick description of the event".[22] Hastrup argues that;

> "the photographs from the sheep-house show the *place* of the ram exhibition. We see men and rams in varying degrees of proximity and we get a feeling of the enclosure that contains only men and rams – no women and ewes, for instance. In that sense the record is true enough. It nowhere catches, however the *space* created by the event, the existential space of cultural experience which made the air thicken with invisible knowledge."[23]

Hastrup represents a negative view of photography's possible anthropological uses, but this is because she remains subject to the positivism of early anthropological uses of the medium; the photograph as record and index. She remains unconvinced of its ability to capture "texture" and so constitute a "thick description".[24] The assumptions Hastrup makes about photography as a medium, and the terms she uses, could both be productively examined further. However, the comparison raises important

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[20] The great majority of anthropologists conducting fieldwork today make use of a still camera, and often a video camera as well. What kinds of photographic training do they receive? What happens to the thousands of images produced by anthropologists in the field? Are they transformed into personal archives? Despite its almost ubiquitous use, photography is currently marginalised within the sub-discipline of visual anthropology, and the latter is largely synonymous with film and video.

[21] Hastrup 1992

[22] ibid p.10 Hastrup does not include any photographs in her article, denying us the chance to compare the authority of her account with the actual images.

[23] ibid p.11 emphasis in original. Marcel Proust's idea of the photographer as witness, observer and stranger, someone who is emotionally detached and " may perceive anything because nothing they see is pregnant with memories that would captivate them and thus limit their vision." (Proust quoted in Kracauer 1980 p.258) is worth considering in relation to Hastrup's argument. An investigation of the relation of photography to memory forms part of my study.

[24] It would be interesting to consider Hastrup's reliance on metaphors of surface and depth further.

questions about anthropological expectations of photography. What is the photograph seen to contain or capture? What is considered visible, and what invisible? Where does the meaning of a photograph lie?

Anthropology cannot treat photography as a neutral tool, and it needs to come to terms with its identity as a medium if it is to continue to make use of it and approach it as an object of study. This latter project is part of a wider turn towards 'visual culture' within the discipline, mirroring similar moves within art history and the social sciences in general. Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy have recently argued that contemporary visual anthropology can be divided into two strands. The first involves the use of visual media in the gathering and presentation of research, and the other the study of visual media themselves as part of "visual systems".[25] The latter potentially makes photography an object of anthropological study in itself.

Banks and Morphy go on to propose that "the focus of visual anthropology includes both the properties of the anthropologist's own representational systems...and the properties of those visual systems studied by anthropologists in the field".[26] It is precisely the universalizing assumptions about photography that Hastrup makes that require further scrutiny. Hastrup fails to recognise a range of photography's potentials, or will not admit them into an anthropological use of the medium, and in doing so she raises fundamental questions about photography's identity. Despite its 150 years history, and despite its global reach and its ubiquitous presence in our lives, this identity is still very much a source of contention.[27]

Some early nineteenth century conceptions of photography, such as Fox Talbot's 'pencil of nature', stressed the lack of human intervention in the process, a view echoed as late as the 1960's by critics like André Bazin who claimed that "for the first time, between the originating agent and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man."[28] The legacy of this

[25] Banks and Morphy 1997 p.21
[26] ibid
[27] It is precisely photography's birth and its antecedents that are sources of argument, and were so even in the mid-1800's (see Batchen 1997)
[28] Bazin 1967 p.13

kind of photographic positivism, and a failure to address the corporeal aspects of photography, still haunt anthropology.

Reacting against the naïve ontology of critics like Bazin, John Tagg and other critics like Victor Burgin, argue that there is no such thing as photography in the sense of a singular medium with a unified or universal identity, only a myriad of discontinuous photographies.[29] Tagg's infamous statement that "photography as such has no identity", is founded on the notion that photography's status as a technology is dependent on the power relations which invest it. It has no meaning in itself, no nature, but is a "flickering across a field of institutional spaces" in which the meanings of any individual photograph are entirely dependent on the context of its use by state institutions such as the police, and the medical profession.[30] Following Michel Foucault's discussion of the role of visibility in the development of prisons, Tagg sees photography as a technology of surveillance. A similar approach has been adopted by many recent commentators on anthropological uses of photography, and it has become the main theme in critical studies of colonial photography.[31] The problem with this kind of formal approach is that photographic images are seen solely to reflect, in an uncomplicated way, the concerns and political dispositions of those who made them, and the complexities of the actual historical circulation and consumption of the images are ignored.[32]

In summarising current debates about the identity of photography Geoffrey Batchen contrasts Tagg et al with formalist proponents of the medium such as Peter Galassi, for whom photography is the outcome of a long tradition in Western art and has a specific nature of its own.[33] Taking Clement Greenberg's argument that all art forms have an inherent message of their own, Galassi proposes a set of eternal values for photography.[34] This is similar to Siegfried Kracauer's technological determinism in arguing that each medium has a specific nature which invites certain kinds of communications while obstructing others.[35] However, both Tagg and Galassi understand photography in relation to wider cultural spheres and practices, only differing as to whether they are those of social history, or art history.

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[29] Tagg 1988 and Burgin 1982
[30] Tagg 1988 p.63
[31] Alloula 1987, Green 1984, Faris 1992, 1997
[32] Edwards 1995 and 2001 exemplify a more productive approach
[33] Batchen 1997, Galassi 1981
[34] Greenberg 1964
[35] Kracauer 1980 p.245

Carlo Ginzburg has argued that claims about the relation between images and the cultures that produce them are underlain by the fact "that works of art, in a broad sense, furnish a mine of firsthand information that can explicate, without intermediaries, the mentality and emotive life of a distant age".[36] My earlier discussion of the Somerville photograph demonstrates that formal qualities can be irrelevant in a context where the image undergoes a "radical re-valuation" and as Pinney points out;

> "if an image which appears to do a particular kind of work in one episteme is able to perform radically different work in another it appears inappropriate to propose inflexible links between formal qualities and effect. Instead we need a more nuanced reading of the affinities between particular discursive formations and the image worlds that parallel them, and sophisticated analyses of their transformational potentialities."[37]

Although the arrival of digital media may well have heightened certain fears, insecurities about photography are as old as the medium itself. The great majority of anthropological uses of, and approaches to, photography have focused on its indexical qualities. Any uses or approaches to the medium that were current in vernacular practices were, and are, ignored. The photograph is valued for its physical link with reality, its ability to accurately record and fix. This is what underwrote its use in early anthropology and was responsible for the truth claims of the colonial archive. But this indexical quality can also exert a destabilising effect on photographic certainty. As Pinney points out, the technology of photography;

> "is founded on a paradox for the very capture of light on film implies an inerradicable surfeit... No matter how precautionary and punctilious the photographer is in arranging everything that is placed before the camera the lens' inability to discriminate will ensure a substrate or margin of excess, a subversive code present in every photographic image that makes it open and available to other readings and uses. Thus we might understand photography's indexicality to be the guarantee not of closure and fixity, but rather of multiple surfaces and the possibility of "looking

[36] Ginzburg 1989 p.35
[37] Pinney 2003 p.3

past". It is precisely photography's inability to discriminate, its inability to exclude that makes it so textured and so fertile."[38]

Pinney goes on to take Ginzburg's idea of "cultural filters" as a metaphor for photography. In talking about the records left by the Inquisition Ginzburg suggests that where the inquisitors "recognised" their victims confessions "cultural filters" meant that these confessions were mediated and modulated to suit the inquisitors already existing templates. In contrast, he discusses other "invaluable cases in which the lack of communication on a cultural level between judges and defendants permitted, rather paradoxically, the emergence of a real dialogue".[39] Mis-recognition meant that the inquisitors didn't know what to exclude and so recorded every word, silence, and gesture creating a document of far greater texture than the normal confessional tract. In terms of photography Pinney argues that;

"however hard the photographer tries to exclude, the camera lens always includes. The photographer can never fully control the resulting photograph, and it is that lack of control and the excess which results that permits recoding."[40]

Although photographs do certainly reflect something of the culture that produced them, this does not imply a seamless fit between image and ideology. There is always something in the photograph that is resistant to "cultural filters", that always mis-recognises. This mis-recognition is what allows colonial photographs to be re-contextualised.

This notion of photographic excess has resonates with Walter Benjamin's notion that modernity has not dispensed with enchantment, only modernised it, and that photography opens up the "physiognomic aspects of the world of images, which reside in the smallest details, clear and yet hidden enough to have found shelter in daydreams".[41] This is the 'magic' of photography, and Benjamin establishes the difference between magic and technology as a thoroughly historical variable.

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[38] ibid p.6
[39] Ginzburg 1989 p.160 quoted in Pinney 2003 p.7
[40] ibid
[41] Benjamin 1985 p.203

Photography operates in other cultural worlds, but the great majority of critical writing on photography ignores the spread of this global medium and the culturally diverse practices that are a result of this geographical distribution. Although some of the literature on the historical entanglement of anthropology and photography has included a critical consideration of photography's identity as a medium, anthropology has to a large extent ignored photography itself as a contemporary object of study. The few ethnographic studies of photography that do exist, despite opening up potentially productive avenues of research, are mostly fragmentary and isolated studies - Sprague 1978, (Buckley 2000 is an exception), or only deal with photography tangentially - Forge 1970. Recent exceptions to this are studies of "the social life of Indian photographs" by Pinney, and a consideration of the "visual economy of the Andean image world" by Poole.[42]

Stephen Sprague's work on Yoruba photography in Nigeria serves as a useful example of how ethnographic studies of the medium can suggest a range of productive questions.[43] Photography arrived in Africa in 1839 the same year that Daguerre announced his invention to the world, and this was also the year in which African practitioners began to use the camera.[44] Olu Oguibe has discussed the reception that the reproducibility of photography received in some African communities; "In cultures where the multiple was already a long-standing artistic tradition in place to meet the demands of the community, and portability was the norm rather than the exception, even this quality of repeatabilty was only convenient rather than unique."[45] Photography's reception, and its status as a "new" technology are both historically contingent and, as Sprague shows, the medium can be subsumed by existing visual systems. Sprague discusses Yoruba photographic practices associated with the cult of twins. Memorial wooden statues, *ere ibeji*, are made of dead twins and these are tended as if they are the children they commemorate. Although it is uncertain when the practice started, photography has now come to replace these statues, and if one twin dies without a photograph having been taken of him/her, the surviving twin is often photographed on its own but also again dressed as the deceased twin. The resulting negatives are then spliced together and printed as one image.[46] These memorial

[42] Pinney1997, Gutman 1982, Poole 1997
[43] Sprague 1978
[44] Oguibe 1996 p.231
[45] ibid p.237 This reproducability is seen as a defining feature of photography in Euro-American understandings of the medium
[46] Commercially produced plastic dolls were also used to replace carved figures, and Sprague comments that; "The procedure becomes more complex when one twin dies before their photograph is taken. If the twins were of the same sex, the surviving twin is photographed alone, and the photographer prints this single negative twice, so that the twins appear to

photographs are kept in an altar to the twins and brought out for rituals in the same way as the sculptures previously were.

Sprague argues that for the Yoruba the camera's record is considered inadequate in itself unless it fits into a frame of canonical specifications of representation that govern all image-making in Yoruba culture. He goes on to discuss how photographs of individuals taken in profile are considered inaccurate since, on the one hand they fail to register the totality of the countenance and therefore of individual character and being, and on the other introduce an element of distrustfulness or timidity into the sitter. For the Yoruba, in contrast to some Euro-American models[47], the camera in itself is incapable of articulating the contours of accuracy. This remains the task of the human operator. It is in the image rather than in the apparatus of its creation that the relevance of the medium is situated.

Sprague' s example demonstrates that there are other worlds within which photography operates. In taking photography as its object this study will take into account the interrelationship between indigenous and Euro-American practice without collapsing one into the other, and will directly question the normative value of Euro-American models of photography. The study will seek to "provincialize" Euro-American experience and models of photography through an ethnography of Roviana photographic practices.[48] In doing so it will tackle questions about photography's identity that are important for how anthropology approaches and uses the medium. What are the forms of current photographic practice in the Solomon Islands? How, and in what contexts are photographs produced, circulated, and consumed? How are meanings attached to photographs, and what is their relation to Roviana culture? Although anthropologists working in Melanesia, such as Andrew Lattas, Eric Hirsch, Anthony Forge, Edmund Carpenter and Marilyn Starthern, have mentioned photography, very little work has been done on Melanesian vernacular photographies in comparison to the amount of research on photography elsewhere in the Pacific.[49] The latter tend to adopt an historical focus rather than considering any contemporary practices. I have chosen to include discussions of European photographic practices alongside Roviana ones throughout this study in order to both 'provincialize'

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be sitting side by side in the final photograph. If the twins were of opposite sexes, the surviving twin is photographed once in male clothing and once in female clothing. Sometimes these two exposures are made on separate negatives, which must then be printed together...The photographer attempts to conceal the line blending the two separate exposures in order to maintain the illusion of twins sitting together in a single photograph." (1978 p.57)

[47] For example Bazin quoted above

[48] See Chakrabarty 1992

[49] Lattas, 1998; Hirsch, 2004; Forge, 1970; Carpenter, 1995; Strathern 1997

normative European readings of the medium, and to reveal certain similarities and differences in vernacular photographies in both geographical locations. One of my central concerns with this study is the components of any photographic identity that is based on its technological specificity, as opposed to any 'Western' metaphysic inherent in the medium.

Visual Economy

Contemporary photography in Roviana is, despite being a scarce resource, part of a wider visual culture or, to use Deborah Poole's term, "visual economy".[50] Poole rejects using the term "visual culture" for its implication of a spurious unity, and prefers "visual economy" for its ability to capture a sense of the, often unequal, flows, exchanges and social relationships involved in any "image world". She suggests that; "it is relatively easy to imagine the people of Paris and Peru...participating in the same 'economy'. To imagine or speak of them as part of a shared 'culture' is considerably more difficult."[51] The same applies to considerations of photography across cultures.

This study is concerned with the ways in which visual images and technologies move across boundaries and how photography forms part of the Roviana "image world". The contemporary visual economy of Roviana and the Solomon Islands includes video, TV and various print media, but also other forms of vernacular material culture with a longer history such as shell-valuables, religious sites etc. Introduced media forms one site where ideas of 'tradition' and 'modernity' are voiced and frequently contrasted with each other.[52] This study will situate contemporary photographic practices within the context of this visual economy. Anthropology has increasingly had to deal with a media saturated world and local photographic practices need to be seen in relation to what Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge have called the "interocular field" in Roviana.[53] Appadurai emphasises the connectedness of different visual 'sites', the interweaving of ocular experiences, and the mutual influence of video, advertising, TV and other media. This study will explore the ways in which photography is entangled with this wider interocular field.

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[50] Poole 1997
[51] ibid p.8
[52] Foster 1999, White 1991a, 1991b
[53] Breckenridge 1995 p.12

Foster has discussed an advert for the National Bank of the Solomon Islands, which uses an image of 'custom money' *kastom mani* of various kinds to signal its ability to articulate local traditions with changing times and expanding horizons.[54] Jari Kupiainen has similarly traced the way in which carvings and images of *nuzunuzu* - New Georgian canoe-prow ornaments - have transcended their regional affiliations and become a ubiquitous emblem of a wider Solomon Island identity.[55] They appear on T-shirts, company letterheads, and stamps, as well as filling the shelves of handicraft shops in Honiara. Roviana people and other Solomon Islanders are keen to participate in, and consume, idealised versions of their past, and both examples reveal how regional forms can be co-opted and redefined in entering a wider visual economy. Photographs are not only "of things", they are also objects in their own right with all the complexities of other kinds of material culture.[56] They possess inextricably linked meanings as images and objects that are circulated and consumed in relation to a range of other objects.

The great majority of the ethnographic literature on the Solomon Islands does not consider issues relating to visual economy, and contains only passing references to Solomon Islands image worlds. Although it has contributed substantial historical information and raised some important questions, research on the art of the Solomons has for the most part ignored contemporary practice, although Kupiainen's work on wood-carving is a recent exception.[57] Deborah Waite has recently begun to theorise about the historical relation of wicker shields made in the western Solomons to chiefly power, but no work other than Kupiainen has attempted to relate specific art forms or practices to wider image worlds.[58] Earlier ethnographic accounts from the western Solomons, such as Arthur Hocart's fieldwork in Simbo and Roviana in 1908, make intriguing passing references to visual worlds, suggesting in one instance that Simbo people thought the "soul" could be "caught in a camera".[59] As well as resonating with popular Victorian ideas about "psychic photography"[60], Hocart's example raises questions about

[54] Foster 1999 p.275
[55] Kupiainen 2000
[56] Edwards 2001
[57] Kupiainen 2000 is a recent exception. On the art of the Solomons see Waite 1979, 1983, 1990
[58] Waite 1999
[59] Hocart 1922 Part 1. I will come back to this example later.
[60] Victorian concerns with psychic and spirit photography can be seen to provide an alternative history to the realist version of photography's development which is so frequently recounted.

photographic mimesis and its ability to capture and reveal a self. This study will ask what photography makes visible, and what it obscures, for Roviana people.

> "modern photography has not only considerably enlarged our vision but, in doing so, adjusted it to man's situation in a technological age. A conspicuous feature of this situation is that the viewpoints and perspectives that framed our images of nature for long stretches of the past have become relative. In a crudely physical sense we are moving about with the greatest of ease and incomparable speed so that stable impressions yield to ever-changing ones, bird's-eye views of terrestrial landscapes have become quite common; not one single object has retained a fixed, definitely recognisable appearance."[61]

It seems generally accepted that photography has profoundly altered our perception of, and relation to the world. Kracauer argues that it has been responsible for "the dissolution of traditional perspectives" and a revolution in perception that brings "our vision, so to speak, up to date".[62] Photography is frequently seen as a key element of modernity and its identity as such has influenced arguments around the effects of introducing camera technologies into other cultures.[63] Michel Serres has talked of how the camera has influenced modes of perception, forms of cognition, and systems of knowledge, so transforming the basic means through which we encounter the world.[64] This study will take such claims as starting points for investigating photography in the Solomon Islands.

Geoffrey White has briefly discussed the role of video in the contemporary Solomon Islands, noting that video screenings of Hollywood and Hong Kong 'action' films are a regular feature of life on Santa Isabel, particularly for teenagers.[65] Although he is discussing the situation in 1988, White suggests that an interest in "Western images" had already led to the development of new forms of Solomon Islands dance and music using "Western forms".[66] James Weiner's polemic on "televisualist anthropology" raises important issues for the situation discussed by White, and for any consideration of vernacular

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[61] Kracauer 1980 p.251
[62] ibid p.252
[63] See Faris 1992, 1993; Ginsburg 1994; Michaels 1991, 1994
[64] Serres 1982
[65] White 1991b
[66] ibid p.57

photographic practices in Roviana.[67] As well as the new imagery involved, do 'Western forms' like video and photography bring with them their own metaphysic? Talking in particular about indigenous media, Weiner proposes that visual representation has to be considered in relation to;

> "the particular metaphysic that is reposited in our image-producing technologies, a metaphysic that is just as much a part of our culture and the social relations through which we live it and just as accurately descriptive of it as the *djukurba*, or "Law" or "Dreaming" is a theory of Walbiri culture."[68]

Since it entails the adoption of a foreign metaphysic, Weiner sees media (and visual anthropology) as effecting the "the replacement of genuine historical, linguistic, social, and cultural difference with an ersatz difference among electronic images."[69]. This is a central problematic of my study. For Weiner one negative effect of the introduction and adoption of new media is a transformation of the self. Discussing indigenous video-making as a form of cultural revival Weiner argues that;

> "it would have to be a revival founded on the possibilities and limitations of social and self-constitution inscribed in the new media. It would have to include the mirroring relation of self to self that screen media make necessary and inevitable".[70] (1997: 208)

This study will consider Weiner's claims in relation to the kinds of selves that are revealed, transformed, and made possible through Roviana photographic practices. Within the visual economy of the Solomon Islands, photography potentially represents new opportunities and experiences of self-imaging and as such is entangled with existing notions of personhood. In opposing the dominance of a model of "Cartesian perspectivalism", which supposes a unitary central observer and an equally unified visual field, Martin Jay has argued for the existence of multiple "scopic regimes".[71] He discusses how the tactile and sensuous aesthetic of the Baroque disrupted the hierarchical and spatial order of the Cartesian visual field and how "the body returns to dethrone the disinterested gaze of the disincarnated

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[67] Weiner 1997
[68] ibid p.198
[69] ibid p.208 Weiner's argument relies heavily on a polar view of the media – they are either positive or negative.
[70] ibid.
[71] Jay 1988

Cartesian spectator".[72] This study will explore photography's relation to Roviana scopic regimes, and explore the "diversity of visual subjectivities at work in any given 'image world'".[73] What assumptions are being made about photography's ability to capture a self? What ideas of surface and depth, of internal and external states, are being adopted? Has photography made new selves possible? Photography is an old new technology, and so has relevance for the introduction of other new technologies. Pinney has shown how photography is not new in India; "partly because of [a] semiotic and lexical slippage, the "photo" is not clearly marked as "modern" because its functions are duplicated by so many other forms of palpably ancient representation."[74] Is this the case in Roviana?

Photographic Pasts

> "One thing was clear about doing anthropology in contemporary Papua New Guinea: everyone was self-conscious about "culture". Papua New Guineans, like others worldwide, were invoking culture in dealing with a fluidity of identity and a shift in the locus of important resources in a late 20th century, postcolonial "modernity" - a modernity progressively affected by transnational capitalism and state power. In contexts ranging from local assertion to state certification, culture, equated with "traditional", was evermore employed in these changing circumstances as a source and a resource. It was understood as a central and explicit determinant for current identity and political efficacy." [75]

To say that photography is intimately bound up with memory and history, both personal and group, seems an obvious statement; Eduardo Cadava has recently argued that the two are synonymous.[76] Allan Trachtenberg has similarly proposed that what is considered historical is precisely that which could have been photographed.[77] And Pierre Bourdieu has talked of how "the definitive certainty of an object

[72] ibid p.123. There are many Cartesian qualities in anthropology's early use of photography.
[73] Poole 1997 p.20
[74] Pinney 1997 p.112
[75] Errington and Gewertz 1996 p.114
[76] Cadava 1997
[77] Trachtenberg 1980 p.195

replaces the fleeting uncertainty of subjective impressions".[78] As well as 'modernising' our vision, photography has altered our sense of the past. In looking at photography in Roviana I will consider its relationship to perceptions of the past and the present.[79] For Trachtenberg the utility of photographs to history lies not just in what they show, but in how they construct their meanings; "the historical value of photographs includes depiction but goes beyond it".[80] As Edwards suggests, the realism in which our historical hopes for photography are invested, is surpassed when they are absorbed into alternative histories.[81] The literature on 'returning' historical photographs often stresses their efficacy in "recovering" histories that had previously remained unarticulated and/or unrecorded.[82] This study will seek to question the universality of some Euro-American assumptions about the connections between photography and history. How is photography thought to relate to the past in Roviana? Is photography compatible with local histories?

Kastom is a broad term which covers "culture" and "tradition" and is ubiquitous in discussions of the contemporary South Pacific. The literature on it is extensive and the history of anthropological concern with *kastom* stretches back to the early 1980's and the publication of a special issue of Mankind edited by Roger Keesing.[83] This drew attention to the malleability of *kastom* as a symbol, and the ways in which it could be used to defend 'old ways', but also to promote change; to support national or even pan-Melanesian unity, but also to support separatist movements. The definition of *kastom* was argued to be a discourse structured by political rivalry and a contested domain rather than any simple continuity with the past. This anthropological literature on tradition in the Pacific came at an historical point at which Pacific islanders were increasingly engaged in defining their own identity and traditions in the light of newly independent states. This was the case with the Solomon Islands which became independent of British rule in 1978. The literature that discussed the 'invention of tradition' and the creative use of the past in the present was met with hostility by many Pacific islanders who felt that their rights of self-definition and notions of authenticity were being threatened.[84] In a later article

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[78] Bourdieu 1990 p.36
[79] Edwards (1998) comments on Torres Straits Islanders ability to readily accept photography as another method of visualising the past in relation to well-established indigenous traditions for achieving this.
[80] Trachtenberg 1989 p.xiv
[81] Edwards 2001
[82] Binney and Chaplin 1990
[83] Keesing and Tonkinson 1982. See also Keesing 1989, 1993; White and Lindstrom 1993; Linnekin 1991; Linnekin and Poyer 1990; Borofsky2000 amongst many others.
[84] Reactions to Hanson 1989 were particularly strong, but see also Trask 1991

Keesing suggested that some of the traditions that contemporary Maori and Hawaiians were using as the ideological bases for political movements were largely inauthentic.[85] He argued that "visions of the past are being created and evoked" and that;

> "the ancestral ways of life being evoked rhetorically may bear little relation to those documented historically, recorded ethnographically, and reconstructed archaeologically – yet their symbolic power and political force are undeniable."[86]

However, Keesing does not want to defend previously established versions of the past, or compare currently emerging myths of the past to actual pasts to which he has privileged access. Euro-American models of historical accuracy are brought into question in this debate. He suggests that;

> "perhaps it does not matter whether the pasts being recreated and invoked are mythical or "real", in the sense of representing closely what actual people did in actual times and places. Political symbols radically condense and simplify 'reality', and are to some extent devoid of content: that is how and why they work."[87]

Keesing's concern is that while ritual re-enactments of cultural traditions are being celebrated - dress, handicraft, dance - "actual cultural traditions are vanishing".[88] He sees two processes that operate in tandem, "the celebration of fossilized or fetishized cultures and the destruction of cultures as ways of life and thought", and therefore Pacific cultures are the "site of a double violence".[89] Margaret Jolly argues that the distinction between authentic and inauthentic should be abandoned because of the way in which the presumed unself-consciousness of culture-as-lived is too easily equated with authenticity, while the self-conscious construction or invention of tradition is seen as inauthentic.[90]

In contrast to Keesing, Edvard Hviding emphasises the way in which history and *kastom* in Marovo lagoon on New Georgia continue to be embedded in the landscape and subsistence activities, as well as

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[85] Keesing 1989
[86] ibid p.19 Keesing discusses the Kwara'ae of Malaita who claim they are one of the lost wandering tribes of Israel.
[87] ibid
[88] ibid p.31
[89] ibid
[90] Jolly 1992 p.353

dance and storytelling.[91] Other recent ethnographic literature on New Georgia has also stressed the continuing importance of *kastom*,[92] while also commenting on its declining knowledge-base.[93] From my initial visit to Roviana in 1998 it was obvious that there was a concern with "keeping *kastom*", and that nineteenth century photographs such as those I showed people, were thought to contribute to this process.

Christine Dureau talks of how *kastom* is used on Simbo island in the western Solomons as a means of negotiating modernity.[94] It becomes a framing device, a way of situating current actions and events within historical narratives and, as a means of figuring past-present relations, is one way of creating historically situated subjects.[95] The relationship between 'tradition' and 'modernity' is often stated in terms of a contrast between *taem bifo*, the time before, and the Christian present. This is a relationship that is fraught with ambiguities. As one Simbo islander put it to Dureau; "I can't say properly. They were people of the darkness, people of sin; but they were good people then, not like people now".[96] If photographs are seen to fix history from the perspective of Euro-American models, how do they interact with more flexible Roviana ideas?

In discussing history on Santa Isabel island, White has proposed that it is "through stories, small, large, personal and collective, about old times that people do much of their 'identity work'".[97] The Somerville photograph that I began with demonstrates the extent to which photographs can become entangled in this process and form the starting point for a whole range of stories. ? Turner argues that;

> "when a people selectively fashion their vision of the past, they do so in terms of cultural category's, culturally specific logics...culturally specific models of personhood that inform understanding of motivation and agency, and culturally standardized scenarios."[98]

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[91] Hviding 1996
[92] See Nagaoka 2000, Hviding and Bayliss-Smith 2000, Jackson 1978, New Georgia Archaeological Survey 1996, 1997, 1998
[93] See Schneider 1997
[94] Dureau 1998
[95] ibid p.265
[96] ibid.
[97] White 1991a p.xi
[98] Turner 1997 p.359

The nexus of photography, personhood, history and memory provides fertile ground for exploring some of these issues. How is photography considered to relate to the past ? Is photography seen to contain history or *kastom*? Is photography incompatible with the nature of local histories? To what extent is the photograph no longer the objective inscription of a phenomena, but a starting point for personal narratives?

As well as looking at how the content of specific photographs is seen in historical terms, this study will consider photography's role as a technique of memory. Andrew Lattas has discussed the way in which memory becomes problematised within the context and aftermath of the colonial encounter where it becomes subject to various 're-writings' and becomes and object of contention.[99] For Lattas there is an ambivalence in which memories of the past are something to be both despised - the un-Christian past of "darkness" - but also valued when they are reclaimed as kastom.[100] Lattas has talked of "mnemonic regimes" in the Pacific, and is concerned with "the techniques, practices and contexts within which memory and forgetting emerge as forces for mediating and constituting present existence".[101] Memory is both necessary and involuntary, but also malleable. This approach has been responsible for an anthropological approach that argues that in order for a people to control how they define themselves in the present, it is necessary for them to control how they define their past. Memory is mediated by the structures through which communities apprehend and render time and history significant, and in Euro-American experience photography is one such mediating structure.[102] In terms of photography and memory Roland Barthes has argued that, although the veracity of the photograph relies on the relation between image and referent, the 'meaning' of the photograph is made apparent by "a secondary action of knowledge or of reflection".[103] Barthes maintains that this 'secondary action' is in no way contingent on their content - for example, he employs nineteenth century photographic portraits of strangers to comment on his own condition - so that the photograph becomes a kind of involuntary memory.[104] Photographs can act as catalysts for a diverse range of memories.

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[99] Lattas 1996 p.262
[100] ibid
[101] ibid p.257
[102] The Yoruba photographic practices discussed by Sprague, as mentioned earlier, form one example of photographic memorialisation.
[103] Barthes 1984 p.5
[104] Barthes discussed in Townsend1999 p.10

Lattas has also discussed the way in which individuals construct their biographies through the narrative frameworks which a society provides for recalling the past, a way of memorialising identity.[105] Within Euro-American traditions, photography is one means of archiving memory, a technique for exteriorising it and rendering it repeatable and shared.[106] Recent anthropological work on Melanesia has been concerned with how cultural notions of exchange and debt work to create memory and specific forms of personhood.[107] Both Debora Battaglia and Susanne Kuechler focus their discussion on objects that stand for the body, objects that will "make the absent body present" and function as mnemonic devices for remembering.[108] This study will suggest that photographs achieve this presence in Roviana. Earlier New Georgian techniques of memorialisation are documented in some of the ethnographic literature of the area,[109] but contemporary practices have not been explored. This study will ask how the relation between photography and memory is figured in Roviana? How does photography interact with pre-existing Roviana processes of memorialisation? My intention with the plates I have included is to some extent to let them 'interrogate' each other, to work with and against each other to tell their own narrative.

Methodologies

This study includes a selective survey of nineteenth and early twentieth century photography and other forms of imaging of Roviana in order to establish the various tropes through which it was imagined by colonial powers. This survey is based on archival and historical research in UK, European, Australian, New Zealand, Solomon Islands and, to a lesser extent, US collections. My intention is neither to write an exhaustive history of photography of Roviana, nor to compile a comprehensive inventory of European or Roviana representations, but to explore certain themes that can be discerned by bringing together historical photographs of Roviana from the 1860's to the 1920's, with contemporary photographic practices.

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[105] Lattas 1996 p.257

[106] See Bourdieu (1990) on photography and family histories, and Eduardo Cadava's ideas of photography as a means of "archiving the self' (1997).

[107] See for example Battaglia 1993; Kuechler 1988, 2002; Strathern 1988.

[108] Harris (2001) discusses how, in pre-1959 Tibet, photographs were only made of the dead. While someone was living there was no need for a photograph of them. Ruby's discussion of nineteenth century American post-mortem photography is also interesting in the light of these arguments ((1995).

[109] See Hocart 1922, 1925, 1931; Hviding 1996; New Georgia Archaeological Survey 1996, 1997, 1998

Fieldwork was carried out in Roviana between October 2000 and May 2001, with additional fieldwork in Honiara from June 2001 to July 2001. The study also draws on some material generated by previous visits to Honiara and Roviana in 1997 and 1998. Research in Roviana was initially conducted in pijin English with some Roviana but, as the types of discourses around photography became defined, many conversations were conducted mainly in Roviana.

Photography is both the object of this study and an essential part of its methodology. It provides a range of eminently practical methods for approaching the questions this study is concerned with. Some of the methodologies referred to below have historical antecedents within anthropology, although these have in the past not always been explored to their full potential. Edwards' illuminating discussion of the use of photography by the Cambridge Torres Straits Expedition reveals how the expedition members organised lantern-slide shows for the islanders and entered into various exchanges, taking photographs and giving prints in return for food. They took photographs of islanders weddings and provided photographs as memento mori of deceased children.[110] I hope my study reinforces the productive and creative potential of using photographs in fieldwork.

One of the main methodologies I will make use of in this study is commonly referred to as 'photo-elicitation'; the use of photographs, including those taken by Roviana people, historical photographs and my own photographs, as starting points for discussions. As demonstrated in my introductory discussion of the Somerville image, photographs are a practical way of engaging with people, they provide a tangible external site for discussion and open a space for articulation. Photographs also offer the ability to look at a wide range of responses to a single image. John Collier, a strong advocate of photo-elicitation, writes;

> "photographs can be communication bridges between strangers that can become pathways into unfamiliar, unforseen environments and subjects. The informational character of photographic imagery makes this process possible. They can function as starting and reference points for

[110] Edwards 1998

discussions of the familiar or the unknown, and their literal content can almost always be read within and across cultural boundaries."[111]

Although Collier is undoubtedly right about the productive potential of photographs as paths to all kinds of subjects, it is precisely the nature of this "informational character" of photographs that my study will question. For Collier the "facts are in the pictures"[112], but my study will question if, and how, Roviana people might consider photographs as containing facts. Questions about what is not in the photograph are of equal importance here. Photographs can take on the role of a 'third party' when used in interviews, and this allows the interviewer and the interviewee to explore the photographs together and can create a sense of shared time.[113] I used photographs to talk to Roviana people in a wide variety of contexts, talking to individuals, groups of women, men, and teenagers in both formal and informal contexts. Often groups of teenagers would form a separate group and look at the photographs amongst themselves (Plate 6), or groups of elderly women would sit on mats in the shade (Plate 7). The photographs were performed in a whole range of encounters from excited and confusing groups, to individual moments of quiet reflection.

My study will look at Roviana photographic practices and trace their historical development, and I am concerned with a wide variety of performances of Roviana photography, from family 'snapshots' to the use of commercial photographic studios. From the specific histories and memories that can be attached to particular instances of photography, to a broader idea of what photography is for Roviana people. I will establish the relation of photographs to particular individual's biographies, and also trace the biographies of individual photographs looking at how, and in what contexts they are given or exchanged.

[111] Collier 1986 p.99
[112] ibid p.106
[113] Edwards 1998 discusses the shared time created by Torres Straits Islanders and expedition members looking at lantern-slides together. See also Fabian 1983

Plate 6 Teenagers looking at photographs, Mado, Vona Vona lagoon

Plate 7 Elderly women looking at photographs Mado, Vona Vona lagoon

> "if anyone has a right to nostalgia, to romanticize the past, it is Indians. But for obvious reasons, their view of historical photography (most of which was made "after the fall" in any case), tends to be sceptical, and even casual...It is therefore white people who tend to look with greater longing at the past."[114]

Bearing in mind Lucy Lippard's cautionary advice, above, this study will explore the historical expectations that Roviana people have of photographs, both their own and those of the nineteenth and early twentieth century copy-prints I took with me. For many Roviana people the *kastom* revealed in the early photographic record is as strange and unfamiliar to them as it was to me. Many of these photographs are on the edge of 'living memory' and, although the photographs are undoubtedly re-figured and re-animated - they literally acquire a life - through the process of being 'returned, they often also revealed what was lost. They demonstrated what could not be recovered, and in doing so were often objects that made Roviana people sad. My aim in taking these photographs back to Roviana was not to fill in the historical 'blanks', to uncover the history 'behind' the photograph in the sense of giving them a more complete caption,[115] but to explore their 'opening up' into a whole range of uses.

During my time in Roviana in 2000-2001 I 'exhibited' the photographs I had taken back with me in many ways. Other than the kind of experiences mentioned above, this ranged from hanging a series of photographs by pegs from a string stretched across a room, to pinning photographs and accompanying texts to walls in a semi-permanent form. Exhibitions often took place in people's homes rather than in any public space. The practical processes involved with organising these performances were often revealing as people discussed what photographs should be shown, and how they should be arranged.[116] As well as giving prints to specific individuals and families, and leaving copies of all of them with a local "*kastom* school", I produced several small booklets with photocopies of photographs and texts in Roviana for local distribution. These kind of simple objects often have a considerable impact. They can be given out free, whereas books have to be purchased.[117]

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[114] Lippard 1992 p.14
[115] See Edwards 1994
[116] See Poignant 1992 for an illuminating account of similar processes in an Australian Aboriginal community.
[117] The New Georgia Archaeological Survey and its staff produced several such booklets, all of which were popular with local people. Arguably they are more accessible locally than the kinds of site surveys that archaeology usually produces.

One of the potential problems associated with returning photographs that is seldom confronted, is the issue of who to return photographs to. Where there is an existing museum or equivalent institution this is perhaps less of an issue, although the notion that photographs are reclaimed for history through the Euro-American model of the museum is problematic in itself. But in the absence of any institution the problem becomes more acute. Many Roviana people are keen to set up a local *kastom* school, or 'museum' and the Sokogaso Learning Centre where, with the help of a group of local people, a substantial exhibition of photographs was displayed in March 2001, is a developing institution that will allow some public access to the photographs. However, this is still fraught with local politics, claims and counter-claims, and attempts to make certain individuals "come up".

Taking my own photographs was an important aspect of my time in Roviana. Through photographing people and events I entered into local processes of exchange and reciprocity. Both Pinney and Poole have commented on the many insights to be gained by taking photographs of and for local people.[118]

The study is divided into four sections that deal respectively with colonial imaginings of Roviana, contemporary Roviana uses of photography, the relations between photography and memory, and finally, those between photography and history. In producing a rich ethnographic account of photography in Roviana this study will hopefully contribute to anthropological understandings of the cultures of New Georgia, and to anthropological approaches to photography, as well as to broader debates about photography's identity.

[118] Pinney 1997 pp.8-9; Poole 1997 pp.3-4

1. A "Moral Aeroplane"

Darkness

Norman Hardy's extraordinary visual phantasm (Plate 8) represents a primal scene - the zenith of a particular British imagination of New Georgian and Roviana 'savagery' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In simultaneously addressing the desire and abhorrence of its intended European audiences the painting reveals the slippage and ambiguity that is a central feature of such constructed scenes of 'South Seas savagery'. Although its juxtaposition of sex and death might seem susceptible to psychoanalytic readings, I am more concerned with its relation to a history of colonial imaginings of Roviana. How is this imaginary reconstruction arrived at? How is it connected to a range of representations of Roviana? The illustration, accompanied by a printed caption, appears in Edward Way Elkington's popular travel book 'The Savage South Seas'. The caption reads;

> "A tapu virgin, British Solomon Islands. At the launching of a new war canoe in New Georgia, two virgins are taken from the tribe; one is publicly sacrificed, and the other kept in seclusion from four to five years. During this time an old woman acts as guard over her. Should she break the tabu she is put to death. The skulls on the sticks are a sign to all that if they molest her their heads will be stuck up in the same way. The object in the background is a skull-box; the large necklace is of dogs' teeth, and the small necklet of spiral shell ground down; the ear-rings of pieces of Tredacua."[1]

[1] Elkington 1907 opposite p.136

Plate 8 Illustration by Norman Hardy opposite p.136 in Elkington 1907

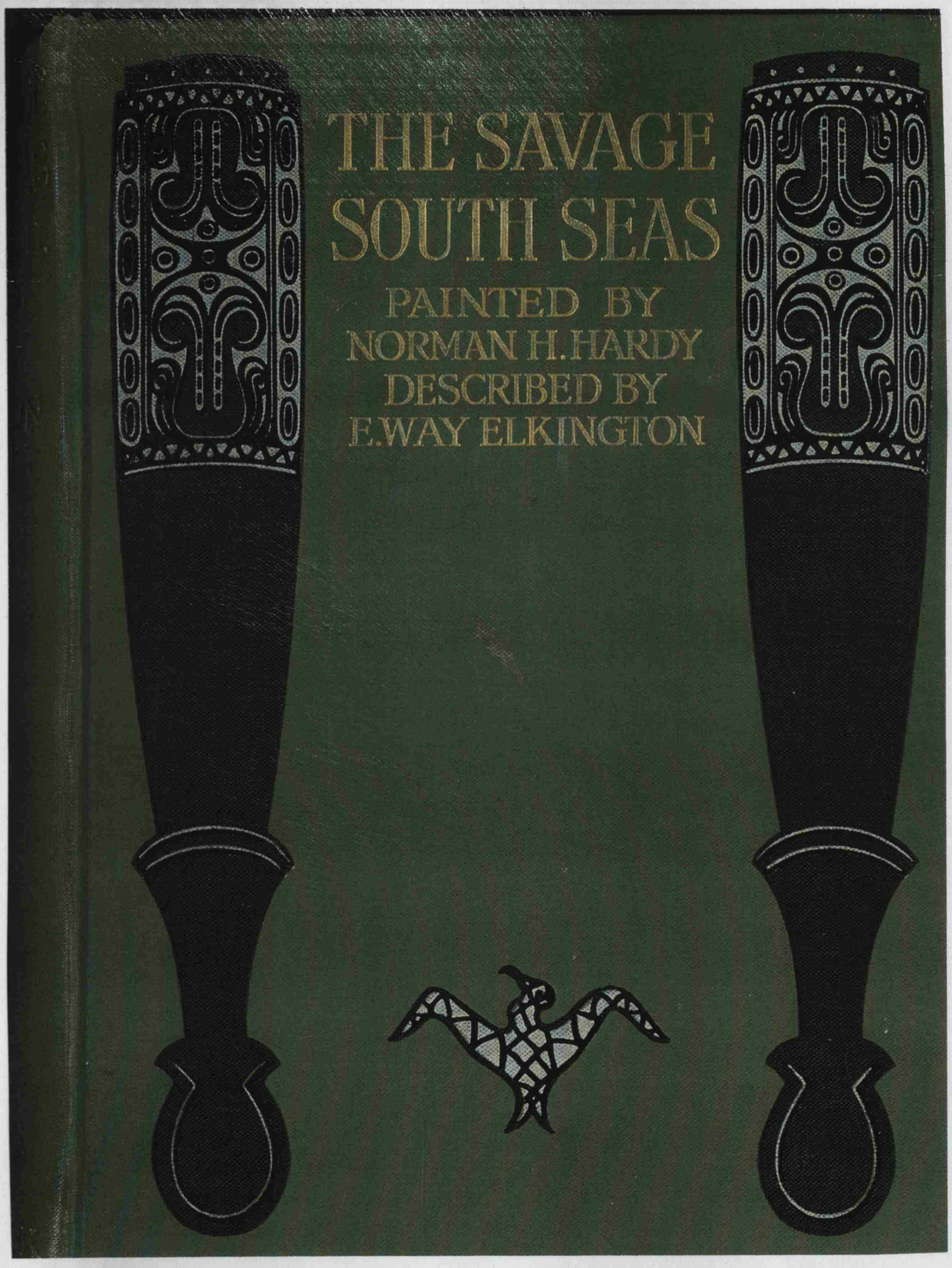

Plate 9 Cover of Elkington 1907

Both Elkington and Hardy were affiliated to professional British institutions; the former was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and the latter became a member of the Anthropological Institute in 1891.[2] Unusually, these credentials are not announced in the book which, with its extensive use of colour illustrations and travelogue style, was aimed firmly at a popular audience. It displays a mixture of scientific, proto-ethnographic concern and a lurid appeal to the imagination. Hardy had a long association with the emerging discipline of anthropology that began in 1883 when, at the age of 20, he was employed by John Beddoe of the Anthropological Institute to work as an illustrator. In 1896 Hardy left London to work as an artist for the Sydney Morning Herald and to travel in the Pacific. Despite embarking on several trips, including that to British New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the New Hebrides with Elkington, he remained aware of his British audience and exhibited a painting of a 'Solomon Islands Head-Hunter' at the Royal Academy in London in 1896.[3] This was possibly the same image which was later reproduced on the front cover of the Illustrated London News on 6 November 1909 with the caption "Better to have amulets than many men: guarded by amulets, Head-Hunter, Rubiana, New Guinea". Although it is not clear exactly when Hardy returned to the UK, on 8th November 1899 he gave a talk on British New Guinea accompanied by lantern-slides of his illustrations at the Anthropological Institute in London.[4] A group of 'learned gentlemen' sitting in the dark looking at images like this one flickering on a screen is one performance of them - one moment in their circulation.

In 1876 the anthropologist Edward Tylor argued that the kind of engravings and illustrations found in travel books failed to capture the specific characteristics of "race" and suggested that "little ethnological value is attached to any but photographic portraits".[5] Despite this assertion, many of Hardy's images are included in the archives of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. The range of contexts images pass through - popular books, newspapers, archives, lantern-slide shows... -

[2] See Hardy's obituary by Edge-Partington in Man 1915 (4)
[3] Averley 1992 Vol.2 p.27.
[4] ibid.
[5] Tylor 1876 p.184.

reveals their circulation, their participation in the flows of a Roviana "image world".[6] Photographs of Roviana taken by outsiders of various kinds participate in this wider image world as they move through a series of performances. Like Deborah Poole, who has written about the "visual economy" of Andean images, I am concerned with "an image world through which representations flow from place to place, person to person, culture to culture, and class to class..."[7] I also take Poole's point that thinking of an image world complicates any notion of a unitary 'colonial gaze' as the simple exercise of power and surveillance.[8] Poole differentiates between 'visual economy' and 'visual culture', the former taking into account the inequality and 'flows' that are not advantageous, that are submerged in any consideration of a shared culture; "it is relatively easy to imagine the people of Paris and Peru...participating in the same 'economy'. To imagine or speak of them as part of a shared 'culture' is considerably more difficult."[9] In this, and the following chapter, I want to suggest the complex network of connections, sometimes ambiguous or contradictory, between Euro-American photographs and Roviana ones.

Elkington's list of ethnographic details - the 'tabu' marker, the jewellery - seems at odds with the scene itself. Like the inclusion of obviously intentionally pornographic images in ethnographic archives, the insistence on 'scientific' detail seems to run counter to the lurid vision that has been constructed. This disjuncture reveals a fissure, a gap between ethnographic detail and fantastical imagination. These two forces are at work in many photographs and images of Roviana. Hardy's illustration is not a scene which precedes any photographic documentation of Roviana, but an imaginary vision which draws on themes already well-established through photography and other visual and textual images of South Seas and Roviana 'savagery'. It both draws on, and contributes to, the 19th century reputation of Roviana people as headhunters and cannibals.

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[6] Poole 1997. In the context of Roviana I am less concerned with the latter set of relations. See also Edwards 1995 for a discussion of the flow of visual images of the Pacific.
[7] Poole 1997 p.7
[8] ibid
[9] ibid p.8

Hardy's phantasm echoes the kinds of staged scenes of cannibalism that were popular with nineteenth century audiences.[10] Nicholas Thomas, in discussing a staged photograph of a Fijian 'cannibal feast' from the 1890's, suggests that the scene of 'traditionally' dressed Fijian men carrying clubs and a 'body', displays no visible signs of European contact in order to effect;

> "an enormous historical displacement of aggression from Europeans, whose colonization of the Pacific depended upon military superiority and the deployment of force..., onto the native, whose complexity collapses into a personification of violence."[11]

Perhaps it is possible to see Hardy's painting and accompanying by-line that adorned the cover of the Illustrated London News of 6th November 1909 as also concerning British anxieties about the possibilities of conflict in Europe - an aspirational search for their own 'amulet' in the form of representational power or efficacy - but it is certainly tempting to see the image as the product of a particular colonial imaginary and a displacement of this kind - an Orientalist exercise[12] - but Elkington's text reveals a more complex picture of the relations between Europeans and Roviana people. In an extraordinary passage - decrying a different form of 'savagery' - Elkington overtly embraces a salvage paradigm, declaring his concern to report on the "last relics of barbarism" because;

> "civilization is coming, coming quickly. Even here, back in the dense bush on a still night when the insects are too lazy to fly and the silence almost speaks, if you listen you can hear the steady tramp of the ghostly army coming nearer and nearer, crushing through everything, sparing nothing - the army of civilization."[13]

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[10] See Poignant 2004
[11] Thomas 1994 p.33
[12] See Edmond 1997
[13] Elkington 1907 p.16

This suggests that encounters between Europeans and Roviana people involved the clash of two competing forms of barbarity; one prepared to sacrifice individuals in the name of religion, the other willing to sacrifice everything to progress. Photography is one technology employed by this rapidly approaching 'ghostly army'; a technology concerned with its own peculiar form of headhunting, and with producing its own 'ghosts'. 'Salvage' and 'savagery' are two of the main tropes developed in representations of Roviana people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Thomas goes on to point out that Fijians of the 1890's would have worn garments of imported cloth and, "from the perspective, say, of evangelists or the British administration in Fiji - the Fijians had already been removed from their state of savagery and heathenism for decades."[14] Andrews' photographic reconstruction produces a figure that could be contrasted with any more acculturated 'natives' to reveal their true 'savage' essence and determine that any hybridity was inauthentic. Such 'savage remnants' despite any Europeanized exterior were a feature of official and popular accounts of Roviana. However, Thomas argues that to see Andrews' photograph as the one-sided operation of power - Fijians as the unseeing objects of a 'Western colonial gaze' - is to be complicit with its aims and ignores the fact that the image "must have been the outcome of some sort of deal or negotiation" and that Fijians were possibly familiar with the kind of images of 'savages' required by photographers.[15]

When Sir John Bates Thurston visited Roviana as part of a tour of the Solomons in 1894 it was in his role as Commissioner of the Western Pacific and he was there to preside over a court case brought by *banara* Inqava against a trader called Edmund Peter Pratt over a land claim.[16] This was a test case for the newly established jurisdiction of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. Thurston was a keen amateur photographer and took many photographs of Fiji and also brought his camera to Roviana. One of the photographs he took during his stay (Plate 10) depicts two lines of Roviana people arranged for the camera in a style that is typical of colonial encounters with native

[14] Thomas 1994 p.35
[15] ibid. p.36
[16] Scarr 1967

Plate 10 Roviana men and boys lined up with two Europeans. Sir John Bates Thurston 1894 Royal Geographical Society, London B7952

populations. The taking of the photograph is itself an enactment of colonial power, and the imposition of order seems to suggest an 'imperial gaze'. It is an official document. Like the written proceedings of the court, it is a record destined for the archive. But other photographs taken by Thurston at the same time complicate this gaze.

The image of Inqava sitting at the stern of a large *tomoko* (Plate 11), a type of canoe used for long distance trading and headhunting, concerns at the moment of inscription at least, a display of Roviana power and efficacy. *Tomoko* were visually emblematic of headhunting; they were a visual synonym for the 'despicable practice' in the same way that 'cannibal forks' were for cannibalism in Fiji.[17] To some extent Roviana skull houses (*oru*), although they were dedicated to the veneration of ancestors, performed a similar role. Although this photograph in one moment manifests Inqava's power, it may in another moment represent the 'savagery' of Roviana headhunters. Inqava demonstrated his ability to use the British administration to his own advantage when he initiated and won the court case against Pratt a mere two months after HMS Curacao had visited Roviana in 1893 to declare the protectorate and hoist the British flag on Nusa Zonga island just off Munda.[18] Despite the fact that Pratt had tricked local *banara*, including Lepe, into signing a deed of purchase for some land to the west of Munda, the British authorities chose to rely on Inqava's oral testimony and reputation as a 'friend' and the "king of Rubiana". Although Pratt was right to argue that the land in question was not Inqava's – his land was at Sisiata - Inqava's victory added to his local status as a "strong" *banara*.[19] Although the Roviana people that visiting Europeans encountered in the late 1890's were nominally 'pacified' in the period following the declaration of the Solomon Islands as a British protectorate in 1893, local networks of trade and raiding continued, although in a much reduced form, well into the first decades of the twentieth century. Roviana people had been, and remained, very much concerned with maintaining a reputation for being "*strong*" (*ninira* in Roviana). The possibilities for any localised acts

[17] See Thomas 1991 pp.165-167

[18] UK RNAS 18 Pacific Islands. Confidential 379 pp.9-11

[19] It also set up some longer term problems over land in Munda as Inqava's reputation with the British grew out of proportion to his actual standing in relation to local *butubutu*, and as his successors tried to maintain an authority over land in the face of other local *banara* trying to reassert their rights. See also Schneider 1996.

Plate 11 Inqava (stern) in a large *tomoko* at Sisiata. Sir John Bates Thurston 1894 Royal Geographical Society, London B8092

of negotiation and resistance over representations need to be considered in this light. From popular travel accounts and newspaper articles about 'heathen practices', to official reports and scientific investigations, images of Roviana both contributed to, and were formed by, contemporary ideas of 'South Seas savagery'. The notoriety of Roviana headhunters may have been something they themselves chose to proliferate. As Thomas argues, "what is true of the representation that reached a public in New Zealand, Australia and Europe is not true of the colonial encounter from which it derived."[20]

Corpus

Unlike other colonial interests in the Pacific like Fiji or Samoa, the photographic representation of Roviana does not constitute a large corpus of images. Roviana is better represented than other areas or islands generally considered part of the New Georgia group, such as Simbo island, but even here the numbers of photographs from the late nineteenth century kept in institutions in the UK and the US are in the region of 2000+.[21] In contrast Alison Devine-Nordström reports more than 15,000 photographs of Samoa made between 1870 and 1925 that are held in US institutions alone.[22] The body of Roviana photographs that does exist in archives and collections consists of images made by 'adventurers' (Ribbe, Burnett); commercial photographers and illustrators who visited the area (Hardy); colonial officials (Woodford, Somerville, Thurston), and Methodist missionaries (Brown, Rooney). At least one of the early traders, Norman Wheatley, also pursued photography and developed his own negatives and made prints in Roviana. In exploring the history of Euro-American representations of Roviana I am dealing then, with a comparatively small number of photographs.

[20] Thomas1994 p.37
[21] I have written to all the major, and many smaller, institutions in the UK, Europe and the US to enquire about any photographic holdings relating to the Solomon Islands and particularly the western Solomons.
[22] Edwards1995 p.11

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century Simbo was the major regional centre for the western Solomon Islands.[23] It was here that whalers and ships on their way to Port Jackson in Australia stopped to re-supply. The first European trader to visit the western Solomons on a regular basis was Lewis Truscott, having discovered the possibilities of trade when captaining whaling ships in the 1840's. In 1851 he brought back a thousand pounds of tortoiseshell and some sperm oil to Sydney from New Georgia.[24] In the latter half of the nineteenth century coconut oil - required for the manufacture of soap and explosives - and by 1876 copra, began to supplant the trade in tortoiseshell, pearlshell, goldlip shell, ivory nuts, and bêche-de-mer - the latter used as a commodity in trading for tea in China.[25] This was accompanied by a gradual shift in focus from Simbo to Roviana as the focus of Euro-American commercial interests. But, although Roviana was on vectors of trade, it did not attract anything like the significant colonial presence that was the case in for Fiji, for example. The numbers of Europeans living permanently in Roviana, and the western Solomons as a whole, remained small, limited to a few traders and after 1893 a handful of British officials, and after 1902 Methodist missionaries. The first reports of an expatriate trader permanently settled in Roviana refer to a Jack Brookfield in 1870, and it was 1880 before a second trader, Frank Wickham, also settled there.[26] Despite belated attempts to encourage settlers from Australia and further economic development in the 1920's[27], the western Solomons and Roviana has never had a large expatriate population.

Although, by 1903 the Australian company Burns Philp were advertising 'tours of the islands' aboard commercial vessels which stopped at "Rubiana Lagoon"[28], the number of visiting tourists was equally small. With no significant expatriate community to cater to, either resident or visiting, there was no call for commercial photographic studios of European origin to be set up in the Solomon Islands. This contrasts sharply with the situation in Fiji and other Pacific islands with a longer history of contact with Europeans and where there was a large expatriate community and a thriving tourist business. Brigitte

[23] See Jackson 1978
[24] Bennett 1986 p.46
[25] ibid. p.47
[26] ibid. Appendix 5
[27] Quanchi 1997
[28] Burns Philp & Co 1903

d'Ozouville reports that the English photographer Francis Herbert Dufty maintained a studio in Fiji from 1871 to 1892.[29] Nordström notes that there were three resident photographers at work in Samoa's largest town, Apia by 1890.[30] Although various members of the expatriate community in the western Solomons were amateur photographers, there were no commercially run photographic studios, and it was the mid-1950's before Chinese traders in the Solomon Islands began to offer a postal service where undeveloped films could be sent away to Australia and prints sent back. Sometime shortly after 1902 the Methodist mission in Roviana set up a rudimentary darkroom at its headquarters in Kokeqolo, and produced prints for fundraising purposes back in New Zealand and Australia. They also gave prints to selected local people, mainly those they wanted to impress, such as local *banara*, or those directly involved in the mission's work. But the lack of any commercial studios in the late nineteenth century means that one of the main genres for photographs of people of the Pacific during this period - studio photographs - simply does not exist in terms of images of Roviana people. There are commercial studio photographs of Solomon Islanders taken by Fiji-based operators - but these are mostly of men from Guadalcanal and Malaita working there as indentured labourers on the plantations. They are mostly rather formal posed images of men holding wooden clubs - sometimes from elsewhere in the Pacific and probably studio props - against a painted backdrop of 'exotic' plants and often wearing 'union-jack' beadwork belts.[31] There are, however, photographs of Roviana people made in other European spaces such as the decks of European vessels, or the verandas' of traders or missionaries houses, which function as containing spaces in the same way as studio backdrops did. There are relatively few commercial postcards or stereographs of Roviana, the main exceptions being some photographs taken by the Methodist mission which were printed as postcards in New Zealand in the early 1920's, and some postcards of western Solomons people acquired from un-named photographers and printed by Kerry & Co. in Sydney.[32] Images of Roviana were not a significant part of the huge commercial circulation of postcards of the Pacific - by 1903 Kerry was producing over 50,000

[29] d'Ozouville 1997. See also Quanchi (ed.) 1997
[30] Nordström 1991 p.272
[31] See Powerhouse Museum,1993 p.72 for an example printed by Kerry & Co.

postcards annually[33] - but those images that did circulate in other formats certainly had a powerful impact on Euro-American perceptions of the people and their culture.

The earliest photographs of the Solomon Islands may have been taken by an Irish artist called James Glen Wilson who signed on as a clerk aboard HMS Herald at Chatham, London on March 5, 1852. The Herald was to explore and survey uncharted areas of the Pacific and its departure attracted much public attention with an article appearing in the Illustrated London News.[34] This reported that Wilson;

> "a young artist, has also been appointed to make drawings of objects likely to prove interesting in illustration of these islands, and the manners and customs of the people" and "by order of the Board of the Admiralty he has been supplied with a photographic apparatus. Up to the present time we have had very few good drawings from this part of the globe that could be depended upon; but now that photography is to be employed, we may expect to have representations of a very superior description".[35]

The Herald visited Makira Harbour on Makira island in 1854, and then toured the eastern Solomons and other areas of the Pacific, returning to the UK until 1861. Although there are two surviving photographs, one of Wilson, and one of the Captain and officers, no others from the voyage are have come to light.[36] The first photograph taken in Roviana that I have been able to locate was taken more than thirty years later by the visiting naturalist and geographer Charles Woodford (see below). The report from the Illustrated London News reveals that photography held out the promise of a "superior description", and this faith in its indexical qualities was behind it rapidly being adopted as a surveying instrument. However, the numbers of visitors to the western Solomons, with or without cameras, remained small until the last decades of the nineteenth century and the

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[32] The latter are housed in the Tyrrell Collection of Kerry & Co photographs and postcards at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
[33] Nordström 1995 p.24
[34] Illustrated London News May 15 1852
[35] ibid
[36] See Black 1979 p.270 The photographs are listed as 'Private Collection'.

photographic record reflects this. As late as 1881 Fred Fairfax, a "special reporter" for the Sydney Daily Telegraph, was still making watercolour illustrations of Roviana people rather than taking photographs.[37] The Solomon Islands were not declared a British protectorate until 1893 and up until that point colonial interest in the western Solomons was limited to responding to the "outrages" committed against expatriate traders, and the occasional visit by an explorer or scientist.

Rather than write an exhaustive or strictly linear history of photographs taken of Roviana by Europeans I will focus on certain key themes and individual photographers to explore certain tropes through which Roviana was represented.

Savagery

Although, on other expeditions, Hardy frequently worked from photographs, it is uncertain whether he did so on his visit to Roviana as he referred to 'original sketches' from which the illustrations were made.[38] But, at a time when photographs often illustrated this kind of travel account, Elkington and Hardy perhaps chose to rely on illustrations to fulfil needs that perhaps could not be met by a photograph. To bring forth this phantasm they had to avoid the detail and verisimilitude that a photograph would have provided. To invoke this particular 'savagery' required a level of fantasy that a photograph would have dissipated with its insistence on the particularities of this person, this place, and this time. In my own research I have not come across any photographs of skulls on poles - that archetype of cannibalism - from Roviana, nor did anyone there that I spoke to suggest that this was formerly a *tambu* marker of any kind. In fact they found the image as fantastical as I did and it provoked much laughter. Perhaps Hardy made use of photographs of skulls on poles from an earlier expedition he participated in to the

[37] See PXD 255 Sketches in the Solomon Islands by F.P.Fairfax Mitchell Library, Sydney.
[38] Elkington 1907 p.74. The illustration opposite p.130 in Elkington looks like it was based on a photograph by Henry Somerville – the text also quotes Somerville.

Kasai region of the Belgian Congo?[39] Despite its pseudo-scientific caption, this image is intended to address a fantasy of savagery rather than any reality.

The small volume, 'Notes & Queries', published for the guidance of amateur anthropologists by the Anthropological Institute of London, suggested that;

> "the best plan seems to be to devote as much time as possible to the photographic camera or to making careful drawings, for by these means the traveller is dealing with facts about which there can be no question, and the record thus obtained may be elucidated by subsequent inquiries on the same spot, while the timid answers of natives to questions propounded through the medium of a native interpreter can but rarely be relied upon, and are more apt to produce confusion than to be of benefit to comparative anthropology."[40]

Although Hardy made sketches 'on the spot', with this image we seem to be at the polar opposite of "facts about which there can be no question". Yet, the assumptions about 'savagery', headhunting, and cannibalism that inform Hardy's image, as well as Elkington's written account, act as a sub-text for many photographs of Roivana that are very much intended to act as ethnographic evidence.

The photograph of a Roviana woman (Plate 12) taken by Captain Francis Barton, who was stationed in British New Guinea at the time[41], provides the kind of photographic insistence that is missing in Hardy's phantasm. Isolated against the wall of a hut - a surrogate for the observational space provided by a cloth backdrop, a plain studio wall, or a measuring grid - this woman is treated in a way which bears the traces of anthropometric photography.[42] The pose is constructed to reveal the local form of dress

[39] There are photographs of skulls on poles taken by Hilton-Simpson or Hardy in the collection of the Royal Anthropological Institute, London.
[40] 'Notes & Queries' 1892
[41] See Wright 2003

[42] See Edwards (ed.)1992

Plate 12 Roviana woman. Captain Francis R. Barton c.1900 Royal Anthropological Institute, London 21494

for Roviana women (*pukepukete*) made of bark cloth and shell. Barton's numerous photographs of New Guinea women, which included many anthropometric images, were also influenced by the Pictorialist style of photography popular in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century and many of them are highly stylized sexual images of young girls. But here the focus is on recording the outer appearance in a 'scientific' manner in an attempt to discern a 'savage type'. There was a perennial fascination with this local form of dress, and undress, which bears comparison with the similarly fetishised body of the other female bodies including the so-called "Hottentot Venus".[43] Barton's photograph is a "fact about which there can be no question" - its indexicality is important - but it is informed by the same prejudices and assumptions as Hardy's image.

In looking at photographs of Roviana it is important to consider some of these sub-texts of 'savagery'. They provide some form of context for how the photographs might have been received by contemporary European audiences, and some guide to the intentions and preoccupations of photographers. They also reveal the ways in which written accounts can reflect, but also inflect, visual representations.

Elkington accounts for the savage practices of headhunting and cannibalism as a kind of "religious mania", and compares Roviana people to the "prophets and priests of old" who believed in sacrifice.[44] He argues that;

> "they do not kill and eat human beings for the sake of their taste, or because they are hungry, as some writers will insist on having us believe. The cause is farther back than this; in nearly every case when human beings are killed and eaten, it is on occasions when such a sacrifice is necessary, according to the natives' religious beliefs."[45]

[43] Abrahams 1996
[44] Elkington 1907 p.97 and p.95 respectively
[45] ibid p.95

Although Elkington comments that headhunting is "losing favour, particularly with the younger generation"[46], he makes numerous references to the "duplicitous nature" of Roviana people in relation to this savagery;

> "When standing before a chief, who is smiling at you and treating you to all the courtesies his nature can conjure up...it is difficult to realise that the same chief a week before was on the warpath, concocting the most devilish schemes, and carrying out the most fiendish atrocities on men, women, and children in his pursuit of heads."[47]

This is a recurrent theme in accounts of Roviana, both visual and textual. On the one hand a connection is often established between peoples' appearances and their intentions; Roviana people look savage and behave accordingly. Henry Brougham Guppy, who visited the Solomons as a surgeon aboard HMS Lark in 1881 wrote of a head-hunter called "Mai" from Santa Ana island - "the cunning and ferocity which marked his dealings were sufficiently indicated in his countenance and his mien."[48] On the other hand, Roviana people are smiling and generous. But this is only to lull you into a false sense of security before striking you down. Either way they are not to be trusted. The terms frequently used to describe Roviana people - "sly", "devious", "duplicitous", "treacherous" - reveal the unsettling effect of this inability to firmly establish an identity through appearances and demeanour. Appearances cannot be trusted. The revelation of interiority through external appearances and characteristics was the common concern of a nascent anthropological science and of popular sciences like phrenology. It was also one of the central concerns of photography. Johann Casper Lavater's science of physiognomy had an enormous impact on nineteenth century desires for legible bodies and faces;

> "Lavater suggested that individuals' moral beauty could be judged on the basis of external characteristics...Certain structural features of the face were codified in a system which permitted the literal and precise 'reading' of character and disposition

[46] ibid. p.95
[47] ibid. p.97
[48] Guppy 1887 p.19

from external features. 'The countenance is the theatre on which the soul exhibits itself,' he proclaimed"[49]

Lavater was interested in discerning 'national physiognomies' and this was one of the overriding concerns of photographers in Roviana. The "cunning" of Roviana people, the inability to trust their appearance and countenance, and the ambiguity of the relation between external and internal traits, was a source of continuing European anxiety.[50]

Elkington and Hardy met *banara* Inqava during their time in Roviana;

> "The most notorious head-hunter in later years was Ingova of Rubiana lagoon...He is old and wizened now, and his hand trembles as he lifts the glass of grog he begs from you, after telling a yarn of the good old days...
>
> ...his feeble limbs, his shaking hand, his bloodshot eyes...
>
> ...Years ago Ingova's Euro [canoe house?] was hung with skulls, hundreds of them strung in the cross-beams with staring, vacant eyeholes, which looked out of nothing and yet seemed to see everything. Their drooping lower jaws, showing sets of white teeth which glistened in the rays of the moon."[51]

This visually descriptive passage contains many elements of European fantasies of headhunting, and is also a narrative of historical change. Like missionary accounts, the 'dark' past is required to remain visible as a necessary counterpoint to the 'reformed' character of the present. Elkington also hints at the deleterious effects of alcohol on native populations, and his description of Inqava as old and malaria-ridden is intended to contrast with his, by then firmly established, reputation as the 'king' of Roviana.

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[49] See Pinney 1997 p.51
[50] Pinney 1997 reports that "One encounters time and time again in administrative and anthropological literature the complaint that in India nothing is as it seems." p.20
[51] ibid p.98

Plate 13 “Ingava, the principal chief of New Georgia” Rev. George Brown 1899
Rautenstrauch Joest Museum 9713_600

The photograph of *banara* Inqava standing next to his wife (Plate 13), one of several of Inqava taken by the Methodist missionary Rev. George Brown on a visit to Roviana in 1899, does show an old man by Roviana standards. But, despite "his feeble limbs" the violence of the recent past is thought to lurk just under the surface. Discussing the reputation of Roviana people Brown says;

> "Mr. H. Cayley-Webster, writing of his visit to the Rubiana Lagoon as late as 1898, says; 'These natives are not only head-hunters and cannibals, but they make no secret of it. They are the most treacherous of all the people in the Southern Seas, and when apparently on the most friendly terms, are only awaiting a favourable opportunity to catch the stranger unawares, and to add one more head to their already huge collection.' These wild people are absolutely untouched by any Christian agency."[52]

The anthropologist Robert Ward Williamson visited Roviana, and also Kolombangara island, in May 1910 and published an account of his visit in 'The Ways of the South Sea Savage' in 1914.[53] Lacking the concentrated focus of his later work on the Mafulu of British New Guinea[54], Williamson's book resembles popular travel accounts in its mixture of amusing anecdote and detailed ethnographic information about customs such as taboo markers. Williamson was a member of the council of the Anthropological Institute and wrote that "these Rubiana people are still extremely primitive, but little changed from what they were, undoubted cannibals, and most interesting to the traveller."[55] While he was visiting the British administrative station at Gizo, Williamson met and befriended Norman Wheatley, a British-born trader who had been established in Roviana since 1892, noting that the latter was "a person of great power and influence in his district."[56] Williamson viewed the 'Rubiana" natives as sly;

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[52] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Dec. 4 1901 p.4.
[53] Williamson 1914
[54] Williamson 1912
[55] Williamson 1914 p.18
[56] ibid p.19

> "In countenance they are generally sinister, and they often have an underhand, treacherous expression, which does not tend to increase one's faith in them; this indeed is well in accord with their character, for a Solomon Islander will rarely meet an antagonist face to face in open hostility, if he can get a chance of secretly stealing up to him and striking him down from behind."[57]

He adds that "acting on the advice of Mr. Wheatley, I was always...careful not to walk or stand with a native immediately behind me".[58] Popular accounts of attacks on Europeans regularly featured stories of the axes that had just been exchanged in trade being used to cut down unsuspecting ships crews. Although Williamson could only communicate with people by signs and gestures his book suggests that he was received with friendliness, and was helped by Pana, a Roviana man employed by Wheatley, who spoke good pijin English. Yet both of Williamson's photographs (Plates 14 and 15) are informed by assumptions about the moral character of Roviana people and its relation to their external appearance. For Williamson the encounters that took place on beaches along Roviana lagoon were with an 'authentic savagery'.[59]

Williamson's and Elkington and Hardy's focus on savagery is symptomatic of many European imaginings of Roviana in the late nineteenth century. Roviana was considered so violent that Elkington identifies only two possible reasons for European interest in the area;

> "No doubt the extreme danger which has always attached to a visit to these islands has made the white man give them as wide a berth as possible, only going there when compelled to either for trading or scientific purposes. It is here that cannibalism flourishes, and the headhunters go forth on expeditions in all their savage grandeur to strike down the unsuspecting neighbour."[60]

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[57] ibid p.22
[58] ibid p.70
[59] ibid p.19
[60] ibid p.94

Plate 14 Roviana man with axe and shield R.W.Williamson 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute No.11434

Plate 15 Roviana women and children R.W.Williamson 29 April 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute No.11370

Science and commerce are indeed two of the major motivating factors behind photographs of Roviana people. Gannenath Obeyesekere has argued that cannibalism was "not only a discourse on the Other, but also constituted a complicated series of discourses between native populations and European interlocutors"[61]. Cannibalism was frequently a 'weapon of the weak' to dissuade European intrusion or to secure trading advantage over other 'more savage' neighbours. The islands of the New Georgia group were seen by European traders, explorers, and colonial officials as rife with headhunting and cannibalism and were, like Fiji, referred to as the 'cannibal isles'. As Elkington suggests, Roviana lagoon was viewed as the centre of these "unspeakable practices";

> "the Rubiana natives are perhaps the most bloodthirsty of all the Solomon group, and, being both rich and powerful, they can descend on a village and overpower it by sheer force of numbers, even without the use of modern weapons, which are now owned by nearly all the important tribes."[62]

Although we are dealing with a series of European perceptions, the 'ferocity' of Roviana headhunters may well have been an image that to some extent they themselves promoted. Roviana people had a vested interest in appearing 'rich and powerful' to other local polities and to Europeans. Victims skulls were displayed in canoe-houses (*paele*)[63], and also possibly in men's ritual houses (*zelepade*)[64], where they were intended as visual evidence of efficacy (*mana*). Shankar Aswani has argued that "success in war made chiefs and warriors very powerful because the capture of more victims manifested the ancestral power of their fighting spirits and magic."[65] There was a desire to make ancestral power visible and skulls, along with a range of shell valuables worn on the body, would have been proudly displayed (Plate 16).

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[61] Obeyesekere 1998 pp.63-86 p.63
[62] Elkington 1907 pp.97-98
[63] *Paele* were also used as 'communal houses' for men, and places where male visitors would stay
[64] Aswani 1998 p.31
[65] ibid

Plate 16 Inqava standing near the stern of a large *tomoko* wearing shell arm rings (*poata*) and a large bound shell ring (*bakiha*) around his neck Sir J.B.Thurston 1894 Royal Geographical Society B7971

A reputation as "bloodthirsty" may have been actively pursued by Roviana people in their relations with Europeans. There is no evidence to suggest that Europeans were treated as anything other than another 'side' - another economically and politically motivated kinship-based group - by Roviana people. Europeans were perceived as belonging to one 'side' - hence the practice of exacting revenge on any available white man - and they were not perceived as a separate class of being.[66] Seeing them as potential trading or raiding partners, Roviana people may have sought to entangle Europeans in local economies of prestige through visual displays of power and efficacy, and through accounts of headhunting. It is not simply a matter of Europeans imposing their own fantasies. In a culture of prestige where appearing "*strong*" was an important factor, Roviana people might have seen their reputation as providing them with an advantage in trading with Europeans, and not perceived it in negative terms at all. In the early nineteenth century, a Simbo *banara*, Lobi, convinced the bêche-de-mer trader Andrew Cheyne that, although Simbo people were also headhunters and that evidence of this was seen by Cheyne (see below), it was the people of Roviana who were truly treacherous.[67] Their stories of the massacre of ships crews by Roviana people persuaded whalers to avoid the area for some years and allowed Simbo people to retain control of lucrative trade and act as middle-men for the rest of New Georgia. As Homi Bhabha suggests;

> "If discriminatory effects enable the authorities to keep an eye on them, their proliferating difference evades that eye, escapes that surveillance. Those discriminated against may be instantly recognized, but they also force a re-cognition of the immediacy and articulacy of authority - a disturbing effect that is familiar in the repeated hesitancy afflicting the colonialist discourse when it contemplates its discriminated subjects: the inscrutability of the Chinese, the unspeakable rites of the Indians, the indescribable habits of the Hottentots. It is not that the voice of authority is at a loss for words. It is, rather, that the colonial discourse has reached that point when...the presence of power is revealed as something other than what its rules of recognition assert."[68]

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[66] See Dureau 2001
[67] Bennett 1986 p.27
[68] Bhabha 1994b p.120

Certainly Roviana people managed to dictate many of the terms of trade and retain their long-established trading networks, although in a diminished form, until the early part of the twentieth century.[69] Their influence over trade was such that Europeans were reduced to trying to imitate local forms of exchange - shell rings called *poata* - in porcelain.[70] Despite the knowledge that headhunting - and certainly any involving the death of Europeans - might have brought retribution from the British, Roviana people seem to have had no reluctance in displaying skulls to visitors or allowing them to be photographed. They did express concerns about Europeans taking photographs of shrines containing the skulls of venerated ancestors (*oru*), and other religious sites. However, the *paele*, where skulls were displayed, was a place of encounter. Although women could not enter the *paele* it was not subject to the kinds of complex visual taboos that applied to shrines. It was the first place any visitors, including Europeans, went; where they met local people and stated their business; and where visitors slept. In this sense it was a Roviana controlled site of display.

Both cannibalism and headhunting were central to the construction of Roviana in European imaginations. The region was seen as dangerous and was never part of the 'ethnographic pastoral', and was not subjected to the kind of Classical or Arcadian transformations that other Pacific islands were - it was not considered an 'idyllic' place. Bernard Smith argued that there were two basic tropes developed in representations of the Pacific in the period 1773-1784; arcadia and savagery.[71] The history of European contact with the western Solomon Islands means that there are no representations from the period Smith is talking about outside of the occasional mention in a whaling logbook, and certainly by the late nineteenth century representations of Roviana were constructed entirely in terms of the latter trope.

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[69] Dureau 1998

[70] See Guppy 1887 p.132 Guppy reports that "amongst the numerous articles employed in trading with these natives is a very good imitation armlet made of tough white porcelain and valued at about half a dollar."

[71] Smith 1992 p.188

The colonial 'project' in Roviana, as elsewhere in the Solomons, involved the symbolic construction of 'savagery', an essentialised native who was "bloodthirsty" and "cunning". But, as Thomas has argued, an 'Orientalist' tendency in post-colonial studies has focussed on "the will to dominate in imperial culture, science and vision, without investigating the ways in which the apparatuses of colonialism and modernity have been compromised locally."[72] It is necessary to take account of the other side of the colonial encounter. European vision and indigenous vision are entangled with each other at certain conjunctures, and at others are autonomous. As Thomas suggests we must remain aware of this 'double vision', the "possibility of "non-encounters" and moments when European and indigenous imaginings were autonomous and did not engage in dialogue; when others were imagined in a way that remained internal to existing imaginative purposes.[73] Neither European or Roviana culture should be homogenized, both are complex and full of contentions.[74]

Accounts from the logbooks of whalers from the early 1800's reveal that certain known sites in the western Solomons were considered safe places to trade and re-supply, and it was the whalers who initiated the trade in tortoiseshell. As the Atlantic whaling grounds became less profitable, activity increased in the Pacific and the Solomon Islands were on the migratory paths of sperm whales. The whalers also required access to local women, sometimes professional prostitutes, and Makira Harbour (Makira) was known as a place where this could be arranged on payment of a small gift.[75] Although these encounters were infrequent - Bennett notes an average of three visits from whaling ships a year at Makira Harbour for the period 1850 to 1870[76] - the image of the western Solomons that is constructed in whalers accounts does have some of the attributes of Arcadian fantasy. There were some occasional violent encounters, but for the most part the focus is on the benefits of trade and the abundance and availability of local produce and women. There is an erotic element to these accounts which contrasts with the way in which Melanesia was often "understood as a masculine domain rather than a feminine one...characterised

[72] Losche 1999 pp.2-3 For one exception to this trend, see Bhabha 1994 which does exactly this.
[73] ibid p.5
[74] See Bhabha 1994
[75] Bennett 1986 p.29 The whalers introduced various venereal diseases to the western Solomons.

by the aggression of warriors, cannibals and headhunters rather than the seductiveness of 'woodland nymphs.'"[77] Roviana was never subjected to the kinds of photographic representation that was a feature of the sexualized portrayal of Polynesian women or women from Papua New Guinea.[78] The relatively late stage at which any visual representations of the people and culture were made or circulated meant that photographers visiting Roviana in the late nineteenth century, although they responded to earlier written accounts, were not competing with any well-established body of visual representations.

Headhunting

From the early beginnings of regular European contact with the people of the western Solomons, headhunting was a key feature of narratives of encounter. Following a visit to Simbo in 1844 the European trader Andrew Cheyne wrote the following account of how he had;

> "visited the Head-chief's village this afternoon on the low island, and on landing the first thing that met my view, was the wall plates of a large canoe house strung with human heads, of both sexes, and apparently of all ages. Many of them appeared to have been recently killed, and the marks of the tomahawk were seen in all."[79]

But despite featuring so largely in written accounts of all kinds, from logbook entries to published volumes, headhunting - or rather the evidence of it - features in surprisingly few actual photographs. There were problems associated with obtaining such images. Those associated with the available technology, with taking photographs in the dark interiors of canoe-houses (*paele*) where skulls were ritually displayed were one limiting factor.

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[76] ibid
[77] Thomas 1993 p.49
[78] Wright 2003
[79] Cheyne in Shineberg 1971 pp.303-304

Plate 17 Skulls inside canoe-house (*paele*) on Nusa Roviana. Charles Woodford. 1886
British Museum Cabinet Card OC/B34/23

The only photograph of skulls actually taken in headhunting raids that I have so far come across in my research is one taken by Charles Morris Woodford (Plate 17). It is possible that some of the photographs taken of skull-shrines and statues of spirits (*beku*), which include skulls either placed in the coral rocks that form their base, or piled in mounds nearby, also include those from the victims of raids, but this is difficult to verify with any certainty. Woodford became the first Resident Commissioner of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1896, but in early October 1886 Woodford was visiting Roviana lagoon as a naturalist and geographer and stayed two weeks to collect specimens of fauna for the Natural History Museum in London. As well as taking photographs himself, Woodford collected those of others and his collection "was certainly the best ever obtained in the islands"[80], but I have so far been unable to locate any trace of it. In the accounts he published in the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society Woodford noted that Roviana people "are the most notorious head-hunters and cannibals", and during his stay he visited a small island in the lagoon, Hombuhombu, occupied by a trader which; "belongs to the natives of Sisieta; they will not sell it, as they use it for their cannibal feasts. I was told that six bodies were eaten here a fortnight before my visit."[81] Woodford proceeded to Nusa Roviana island were he found that most of the men were away on a headhunting raid to Isabel;

> "I here photographed the interior of a tambu house, the post of which was carved to represent a crocodile. Along the rafters was a row of heads. I also took a photograph of a collection of sacred images, near to which was a heap of skulls, upon every one of which I noticed the mark of the tomahawk."[82]

Woodford also wrote of visiting Inqava's *paele* in Sisiata;

> "The house contains two large canoes and several smaller canoes. In racks above my head are stowed away all sorts of gear; fishing nets...are suspended by wooden hooks from the roof. Bones of fish, pigs' jawbones, and turtles' heads are hung

[80] Guppy commenting on Woodford's lecture to the RGS on 26th March 1888 in Woodford 1888 p.376
[81] Woodford 1888 p.360
[82] ibid.

along the rafter of one side, and from the other a row of eight human heads look down upon me..."[83]

During the remainder of his two weeks in the lagoon Woodford saw a further eight heads in another canoe-house, and thirteen in yet another and, when the Nusa Roviana men returned from Isabel they brought with them the heads of three men and two women, and "during the fortnight that I spent in the lagoon I heard of no less than thirty-one heads being brought home". Woodford also commented on the cannibalism associated with headhunting "not only will the New Georgian natives eat the bodies of those killed in battle, or prisoners, but they will exhume the bodies of those recently buried for their disgusting purpose."[84] Cannibalism was "a matter of constant occurrence" and headhunting "a perfect passion".[85] Although, as Woodford pointed out various punitive raids had been carried out in Roviana by British gun-ships in an attempt to suppress the latter practice, several white men had recently been murdered on Rendova island, heads being required for the launching of a new canoe. Woodford was so concerned about the level of headhunting that he wrote to Sir John Bates Thurston, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, on the matter.[86] Returning to Roviana in March 1887 Woodford stayed with the local *banara* Ingava and Wonge and he reported that six heads had recently been brought back from Bogotu on Santa Isabel island, one of which was the head of a native teacher from the Melanesian Mission there.[87]

William Arens has famously argued that the 'myth' of cannibalism was a device that justified racism and imperialism and was a means of establishing difference,[88] and Peter Hulme has suggested that the figure of the cannibal served as an Other for the modern subject as well as a legitimating trope for cultural appropriation.[89] The cannibal is the inverse of the European subject, but also represents the dangers of reverting to a state of barbarism. There is a sense in which the cannibal becomes a seductive figure. Bronwen

[83] Woodford 1890b p.152
[84] Woodford 1888 p.374
[85] ibid.
[86] ibid. p.375
[87] ibid. p.361
[88] Arens 1979 See also Poignant 2004

Douglas has discussed French reactions to an eighteenth century Kanak re-enactment of cannibalism;

> "We cannot know whether the French reactions were those intended by the Kanak protagonists - textual inscription was certainly not one of them - but I am convinced the performance was consciously intimidatory and contestatory, a deliberate and successful psychological assault to exploit the evident horror of cannibalism previously expressed by these strangers."[90]

The Kanak then tease the French, feeling their arms and legs as a way of threatening a more powerful enemy and asserting their own agency and sense of humour. Douglas suggests that "merely to condemn colonial texts and deplore their tropes as repulsive is to re-empower them and endorse the continued, if now largely negative, discursive hegemony of colonialism."[91] We must remain aware of the possibilities of performance in considering photographs of Roviana.

Woodford's photograph of skulls displayed in the interior of a canoe-house on Nusa Roviana provides an illuminating counterpoint to Hardy's illustration of Roviana 'savagery'. A Roviana space of display is depicted in Woodford's image, the skulls are neatly lined up in the rafters for visitors to view. Although they allowed Woodford to photograph this display they did not allow him to photograph any of the "sacred images" on or near shrines.[92] Showing this photograph to Roviana people in 2000-2001 provoked a range of ambivalent reactions. Although the feats of headhunting ancestors belong to the "*taem bifo*" (time before) - they are a feature of the "darkness" of Roviana life before the arrival of the Methodist mission in 1902 - there was also a sense of pride in the fact that their ancestors and *banara* were "strong". The photograph is an example of Thomas's point that what was received in Europe or Australia was not true of the

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[89] Hulme 1986
[90] Douglas 1999 p.81
[91] ibid. p.92
[92] Woodford 1888 p.360

encounter which produced it.[93] Woodford's photograph was evidence and although he did not include the image in his book, 'A Naturalist Among the Headhunters' published in 1890, it was destined for the collection or the archive. He was a naturalist and geographer who amassed large collections of Solomon Islands fauna - over 17,000 specimens - which are now housed in the Natural History Museum in London.[94] Given that the publication and circulation of accounts and representations of Roviana headhunting were intended to legitimate increasing British juridicial and administrative interest in the area, it seems strange that Woodford's photograph was not widely published. Although it was intended to reveal the 'savagery' of headhunting, for Roviana people the display demonstrated the power and efficacy of their *banara*. Again, both the photograph and Hardy's phantasm are informed by the same attitudes towards Roviana culture, and in this sense they are connected.

Engravings based on some of Woodford's photographs, including one of the exterior of a Roviana *paele*, appeared in the Illustrated London News in 1889 where they were printed to look like actual photographic prints you could hold in your hands.[95] There is a desire to grasp hold of objects through photography, and the "superior description" which they afford is intimately bound up with their materiality (Plate 18). Woodford preserved the collection of specimens he amassed in Roviana by placing the dead bodies of animals, birds, moths, and insects in glass jars of formaldehyde. This collection and archiving of 'specimens' is a similar demonstration of efficacy to the Roviana display of heads, and photography was similarly an aberrant a kind of headhunting.

[93] Thomas1994 p.37
[94] See Tennent 1999
[95] Illustrated London News February 23 1889

Plate 18 Glass negative of Plate 11 Inqava (stern) in a large *tomoko* at Sisiata. Sir John Bates Thurston 1894 Royal Geographical Society, London B8092

Plate 19 Draws of photographs at the Royal Geographical Society, London

Archive

The archive was the ultimate destination for many of the photographs taken of Roviana in the late nineteenth century, although sometimes this remained an organising principle and a source of motivation, rather than resulting in the actual formation of a physical archive.[96] 'Salvage' was one of the major ways of appropriating Roviana; a way of consuming Roviana culture. Elkington identified 'science' as one of two possible reasons for Europeans to visit an area perceived as dangerous, and Roviana was subjected to a variety of small-scale surveys. The earliest was that carried out by Henry Guppy in 1881.

Guppy was a surgeon aboard HMS Lark which was conducting a hydro-graphic survey in the western Solomons, but he was also an amateur anthropologist and Fellow of the Geographical Society and carried out his own research. It is not clear whether Guppy visited Roviana, although he makes many comments about the people and culture, but he did conduct anthropometric surveys of people on Makira, Santa Anna, Treasury Island, the Shortland Islands, Choiseul and also smaller surveys on Malaita and Simbo. He measured cephalic indexes, stature, weight, skin colour, and hair colour and read a paper on the physical characteristics of Solomon Islanders to the Anthropological Institute in July 1885.[97] Referring to the systematization of skin colour devised by Paul Broca and published in the Anthropological Institute of London's handbook for amateur anthropologists 'Notes & Queries' of 1874, Guppy noted that the skin of a "typical islander" "would be a deep brown, corresponding with number 35 of the colour-types of M.Broca" and that "the prevailing darker hue of the western islands is represented by number 42".[98] He also recorded four types of hair in his survey - "woolly", "mop-like", "partially bushy", and "completely bushy", including the thickness of the hair and the diameter of the spiral.[99] His conclusion was that "it would appear that in this group, the qualities of treachery and ferocity are possessed in a greater degree by those communities in which hairy men prevail."[100] He measured the sight of people using a test developed for recruits in the British army, but found no differences that would support the view that

[96] Richards 1993
[97] Guppy 1887 p.98
[98] ibid p.102 and p.120 respectively
[99] ibid p.116

"savages possess superior powers of vision as compared with civilized races".[101] Guppy attempted to grasp hold of Solomon Islanders through a range of measurements and then fix them on a physiognomic and evolutionary scale, reinforcing the connection between external appearances and 'savagery'.

The photographs taken by Lt. Henry Boyle Somerville were made during his survey of the coast of New Georgia in 1893-4 for the British Navy's Hydrographic Survey of the South Pacific. They show an informality that often contradicts Somerville's written account. Despite commenting, some 25 years after his time in the Solomons, that New Georgians were "for the most part complete savages still, and to a certain degree cannibals", Somerville's photographs reveal a relaxed and often humorous relation with local people.[102] In his 1928 lantern-slide lecture to the Cork Literary and Scientific Society, 'Surveying in the South Seas', Somerville said of a photograph of a New Georgianand a European sailor standing side by side (Plate 20);

> "This slide shows you the contrast in physique between an ordinary young Englishman of 20 or so, and a New Georgian of about the same age. The contrast is scarcely a fair one really, for many of the natives were of better build than this specimen"[103]

In this instance the formation of an anthropometric archive, interested in discerning 'specimens' rather than individuals, is nevertheless the result of good relationships with individuals. Somerville took an extensive series of anthropometric measurements of people in Roviana and also Marovo Lagoon, and a series of notebooks containing these are housed in the collection of the Royal Anthropological Institute. One of the notebooks mentions the fear induced by the callipers for measuring cephalic indexes, but despite local reluctance Somerville amassed a large number of records. The notebooks contain hundreds of measurements, painted swatches to indicate skin colour, drawings of nose

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[100] ibid p.119
[101] ibid p.122
[102] Somerville 1928 p.33
[103] ibid p.36

Plate 20 New Georgian and European sailor. Henry Somerville. 1893-4 Royal Anthropological Institute Lantern-slide 13563

profiles, some small white envelopes of hair samples, and the odd anthropological note about material culture or translation (see Plates 21 and 22). There is a tension between Somerville's language - "this specimen" - and the photographs which suggest a different narrative of encounter.

Somerville referred to this photograph of four smiling Marovo men (Plate 23) in the following way; "here we have four young bloods of Munggeri, a village near one of our camps, all great friends of ours, four happy young cannibals".[104] In his 1928 lantern-slide show he went on to recount a story of cannibalism involving those portrayed in the photograph; discussing the fate of a white trader who was killed, after which;

> "his body was then cut up into small bits, and the bits had been taken round to every village of the lagoon...and had then been cooked and ceremoniously eaten by every young man in the place. By doing so they hoped to acquire, if possible, some share of the pluck of the deceased, and of his skill at cheating in trade. Reprisals had been taken for this murder by the British gunboat on patrol, and the traders' skull, and the bones of one foot had been recovered and suitably interred. And now here again were our friends of the year before...wiping their lips, as it were, after the gruesome feast, and smilingly walking into our camp as if nothing had happened."[105]

If taken at face value this would seem to contradict the claims made by Arens, but the extent to which Somerville was fed rumours of cannibalism in this instance is unclear, certainly there were occasions when he was deliberately misinformed.[106] Edvard Hviding, an anthropologist who has worked in nearby Marovo lagoon, has pointed out that the translation Somerville was given to one of the songs he recorded were perhaps intended

[104] ibid p.37
[105] ibid p.38
[106] Hviding personal communication 1999

Plate 21 Drawings of nose profiles from Somerville 1893-4

Plate 22 Page of measurements from Somerville 1893-4

Plate 23 Four men from Marovo Lagoon. Henry Somerville. 1893-4. Royal Anthropological Institute Lantern-slide 12852

as a joke - the translation he was given linked it to local customs, but the correct translation of the Marovo reveals it as comment on the stupidity of the British. Somerville transforms an image that appears humorous into a further example of the slyness of natives. The textual account, despite being provided some thirty years later, interferes with the visual representation and suggests the persistence of myths of Roviana duplicity. Somerville and his men established good relations with local people and lived amongst them for weeks at a time as the crew split up to survey the coastline (Plate 24). It is hard to reconcile the familiarity this must have bred, with the tone of Somerville's language.

Somerville used the term 'surveying' in two senses. Firstly, as the process of chart-making, but also with reference to "the wide outlook that may be made, as from some kind of moral aeroplane, over the affairs of mankind, and the places he inhabits."[107] Somerville had previously pointed out in his 'ethnographical notes' in the journal Man published by the Anthropological Institute in London, that he thought the New Georgians were "doomed to disappear" and that this was of no great loss to the world "except from a scientific point of view"[108]. The notion that the people and culture were on the verge of disappearing was the motivating factor behind the salvage paradigm of surveys like Somerville's, and its trace is apparent in many photographs of Roviana from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Like Guppy, Somerville took with him a copy of 'Notes and Queries in Anthropology' published by the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1874 and intended as a guide for amateur anthropologists to enable them to gather the kind of information that anthropologists at home required. In 1882 William Henry Flower, curator of the British Museum and President of the Anthropological Institute, argued for the archival value of photographs to ethnography;

[107] ibid p.1
[108] Somerville 1896 p.411

Plate 24 Crew of HMS Penguin and tents on shoreline. Henry Somerville 1893-4 Royal Anthropological Institute Lantern-slide 13561

> "with their histories carefully registered, [photographs] of any of the so-called aborigine races, now rapidly undergoing extermination or degeneration, will be hereafter of inestimable value. Drawings, descriptions and measurements are also useful, though in a far less degree."[109]

Photography promised a way of preserving that which was so rapidly disappearing, it perfectly fitted the 'salvage paradigm' of early anthropology. Somerville is an example of the amateur anthropologist collecting material for those at home but, although his coastal charts of New Georgia were used, his notebooks full of precise anthropometric measurements were not consulted.

As early as 1832 d'Urville identified two distinct races Polynesians/Micronesians and Melanesians with the former racially, morally and politically superior.[110] Bronwen Douglas has discussed the ways in which scientists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century's used artist's representations to differentiate Oceanic groups in terms of race and how;

> "Unpredictable exotic experience and the flow of empirical data back to the metropoles, especially from the Pacific, contributed significantly to the decline of neoclassical idealism in art and science - including a nascent anthropology - presaging the triumph of romantic sensibility in art and literature, the 'biologization' of the human sciences and, eventually, an evolutionist cosmology."[111]

Visual representations of Pacific islanders helped instigate a shift from a humanist view of race to a scientific one. By the time the photographers I am considering here were working, this view had long been the accepted one and their work is explicitly informed by that 'biologization'. The photographic record of Roviana contains many images that

[109] President's Address JAI 11 1882 p.184
[110] Douglas 1999 p.65
[111] ibid p.69

constitute a kind of "moral aeroplane", making pronouncements on 'moral beauty' based on external 'characteristics'.

The anthropologist Robert Williamson, mentioned earlier, visited Roviana, and other areas of New Georgia, in 1910.[112] He thought that the people of 'Sychele' (Saikile) at the eastern end of Roviana lagoon were "on a scale of culture somewhat lower than that of their western neighbours", this being mainly due to their physical appearance and the fact that their canoes were less heavily ornamented and they possessed fewer shell ornaments.[113] Although he took photographs of religious sites and shrines (*hope*), skull houses containing the remains of ancestors (*oru*), and also a large series of taboo markers on Kolombanagra, many of the images Williamson produced were anthropometric in style.

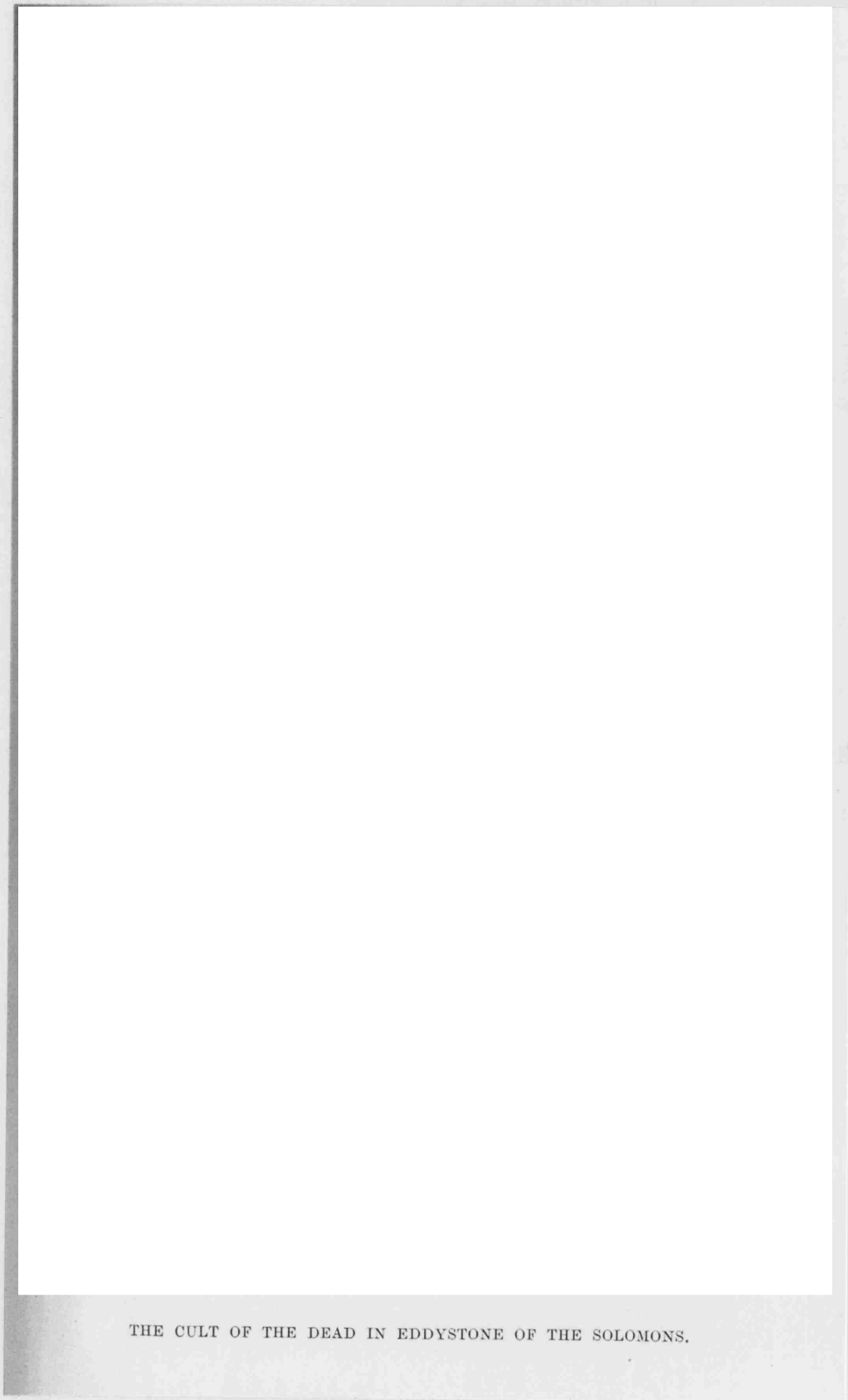
In its adoption of an anthropometric aesthetic and a profile pose, which again is intended to reveal the local style of dress (*pukepukete*), Williamson's photograph of two Roviana women (Plate 25) conforms to an accepted way of measuring and representing racial and cultural 'types'. Observation is the key term here - in the sense of a certain kind of scientific scrutiny which attempts to fix Roviana people. Williamson was interested in 'types' rather than individuals and, although he recorded the exact dates on which photographs were taken, he did not record the names of any of the people he photographed. Although the Methodist mission had been established nearby at Kokeqolo for eight years, this photograph - and many other similar images taken by Williamson - reveal that Christian attitudes to dress had not yet been adopted by the population as a whole. Williamson commented that "their mode and ideas of life have been very little modified anywhere, and in most of the villages they still remain unchanged."[114]

[112] Williamson1914
[113] ibid p.40
[114] Williamson 1914 p.18

Plate 25 Two Roviana women. R.W.Williamson 25 April 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute 78615

The British anthropologists Arthur Hocart and W.H.R.Rivers carried out fieldwork on Simbo in 1908 and also spent some time in Roviana.[115] Theirs was the first extended piece of research carried out in the western Solomons and, perhaps because of Rivers' earlier experience of the utility of photographs, moving footage and recorded sound on wax cylinders produced on the Cambridge Torres Straits expedition[116], they took a camera with them. The great majority of the relatively small number of photographs they took are of named Simbo individuals such as Njiruviri, their main informant (Plate 26), or of religious sites and skull shrines.[117] Although these photographs are reproduced full-face and profile, belying an anthropometric aesthetic, and are very much a part of the salvage paradigm of much photography of Roviana, they go beyond this. In handling the small, fragile prints in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, as they appear from archival boxes, they also conjure up a sense of presence. That they do so despite their inclusion in the archive and their intended use as indexes of difference suggests, as do some of the other examples considered above, that the colonial project of delineating Roviana 'savagery' was neither complete or without internal contradictions. As Edwards suggests; "the definitions of cultures, to which photographs have so forcefully contributed, might at some level, for some images, emerge as just part of their biography."[118]

[115] The research carried out by Hocart and Rivers was supported by the Cambridge University and the pair spent three months working on Simbo together , then Hocart worked for a few weeks there on his own, before proceeding on his own to Roviana for six weeks. The two met up again for a brief "tour" of Vella Lavella and Hocart carried out brief periods of further work on Simbo and Kolombagara (Hocart 1922 p.71).
[116] See Edwards 1998
[117] They also got Simbo people to produce drawings some of which Hocart reproduced in his articles.
[118] Edwards 2001 pp.21-22



THE CULT OF THE DEAD IN EDDYSTONE OF THE SOLOMONS.

Plate 26 Page of illustrations from 'The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons' by Arthur Hocart Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute Vol. LII 1922 Plate V

Light

The arrival of the Methodist mission - known locally as *lotu*[119] - in Roviana in 1902 initiated a period that was concerned with producing 'new persons'; with fashioning Christian individuals and, importantly, Christian bodies. This was achieved visually as well as physically. The mission was concerned with establishing a narrative of 'before' and 'after' that was necessary for the transformation of individuals through the salvation it offered. It required a 'savage' past against which to contrast the 'saved' individual.[120] The Australian Methodist Missionary Review published accounts of the arrival of the mission in Roviana and declared that ;

> "the inhabitants are known as the most inveterate head-hunters of the Pacific, and for many years the traders have earnestly pleaded with the Naval authorities to suppress this horrible practice...No men have ever needed the Gospel more than the much-dreaded natives of New Georgia."[121]

When Rev. George Brown visited Roviana in July and August 1901 aboard SS Titus he "found the people in a state of great excitement over a large feast which Igava was about to give to celebrate the opening of a new house which he had just built".[122] That the house was opened without the usual requirement of heads taken in raids to inaugurate it, was remarked upon as evidence of the influence of Charles Woodford and the success of 'pacification'. Brown was in Roviana to discuss the possibilities for starting a mission there, but Woodford had advised him not to mention the opening of a mission building as it was likely to be rejected outright by local people. The Methodists were officially responding to a 'call' from Guadalcanal people who had worked as indentured labourers in Fiji for a mission to be established on Guadalcanal, "to go and save the people who are in spiritual darkness"[123]. But Roviana was eventually chosen as a base in the Solomons because it was a site that would not encroach on any of the territories claimed by other missions; "outside the dotted line which in the latest map issued by the Society

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[119] A pijin adoption of a Polynesian word that reflects the influence of South Seas teachers.
[120] See Lattas 1996b
[121] Australian Methodist Missionary Review March 4 1902 p.4
[122] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Sept. 9 1901 p.3

[Melanesian Mission] 'shows the present sphere of work'".[124] Brown was well aware of the power of visual images having made considerable use of them elsewhere in the Pacific[125], and he gave a lantern-slide show to Roviana people;

> "I did this with a set purpose, as I wished to show them what the Gospel had done for other people. We had a big crowd, and Igava [Inqava] stood quite close to me, and, as he understood English very well, I was able to address some of my remarks to him for his own special benefit. I showed them in the slides what the people of New Guinea and other places were before the introduction of Christianity and what they were afterwards. I showed them the missionary in Fiji with his school boys, and the missionary's wife with her school girls, and some other views which I thought would explain the object of our visit."[126]

In deciding to use this kind of visual imagery, Brown was following in a long tradition of colonial attitudes to mnemonics which suggested that the 'native mind' was more susceptible to images than abstract concepts. But despite the favourable impression the lantern-slide show apparently made, Inqava remained opposed to the mission. Brown decided not to ask Inqava directly for permission; "the people all know that we intend to come, and so far as I can learn, there will be no serious objection to our coming. It will be much better to come without having asked permission rather than to come in the face of a refusal."[127] Brown was a keen photographer - many of his images appeared in the Australian Methodist Missionary Review and his own books[128] - and he made a series of photographs on an earlier visit to Roviana in August 1899. Commenting that "many of the villages in that part were destroyed some years ago by H.M.S. Royalist, for some outrages committed against white men and they do not yet appear to have recovered"[129],

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[123] ibid p.6
[124] ibid p.8
[125] See Brown 1908
[126] ibid
[127] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Oct. 8 1901 p.2
[128] Brown 1908, 1910
[129] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Nov. 6 1899 p.2

Brown visited some local "tambu houses" only to find that "the best of these had been destroyed by the ship of war, some years ago."[130] On Nusa Roviana he saw;

> "a large wooden idol or totem pole, at a place called Okarapa or Kokorapa. There was no house over this but the women could not go near it and the men living there did not appear at all comfortable when they were near it. The bush in which it stood seemed to be a kind of sacred grove. We managed to secure the goodwill of the few people about and were able to photograph it, and also get some other pictures of interest."[131]

Brown was concerned with documenting the 'savage', 'dark' practices of the recent past as these were useful in developing narratives of conversion. To this end he took a series of photographs of religious sites in and around Roviana (Plate 27). Photographs of material culture, such as shrines and skull houses (*oru*) could stand in for 'heathen practices' in a visually emphatic way. The photograph of a religious carving (*beku*) on a shrine (Plate 28) was reproduced in an article in the Missionary Review extolling the desperate need for the people of Roviana to emerge from the "darkness" of their former "savagery" and into the "light of Salvation", and included a plea for funds to set up the mission in Roviana.[132] But, although many of the practices that Brown commented negatively on were still very much a part of contemporary Roviana culture, their 'savagery' is somehow liminal. Missionaries required a combination of 'savagery' in the recent past accompanied by a series of redeeming, or redeemable, features in order to justify conversion. The concern in Brown's photographs is not just with difference and the shock of 'savagery', as is the case with Hardy's image, but with creating an interest in the work being done to abolish it. The photographs that Brown took elsewhere in the Pacific included many images of named individuals, some of which he included in his autobiography.[133] But most of the photographs he took of Roviana people are anthropometric in style.

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[130] ibid p.3
[131] ibid
[132] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Dec. 8 1900 p.7
[133] See Brown 1908 and also Gardner 1999

Plate 27 “Burial place, Rubiana, showing miniature house in which the skulls of dead relations are placed” Munda Rev. George Brown 1899 Royal Geographical Society PR 056649

Plate 28 “Sacred image in bush, Rubiana, New Georgia” Rev. George Brown 1899 Royal Geographical Society PR 056652

Plate 29 was reproduced as Figure 2. in Brown's 'Melanesians and Polynesians', but the individuals remain un-named in the book which otherwise features many portraits of named individuals. Plates 30 and 31 reveal some of the photographs had an overtly anthropometric format and taken together display a sense of 'before' and 'after', even though the mission had yet to be established. The adoption of a European dress by *banara* Gumi's wife is not then, a sign of any Christian influence. Brown also took a series of photographs (Plates 32, 33, and 34) that were intended to be humorous, but in a way that underwrote an essentialised 'savagery'.

The distended pierced earlobes of Roviana men had been commented on by other visitors and formed almost a sub-genre of Roviana photography. They were emblematic of bodily difference. Methodist missionary views encouraged a series of paternalistic metaphors of adult/child that accompanied those of light and dark. But there was an ambivalence to this discourse that, like mission discourses elsewhere, justified itself on the grounds of difference - which legitimated the right to convert - but also seemed concerned with "the eventual erasure of difference in the name of a common humanity and modernity."[134]

The Rev. John Francis Goldie, who set up the Methodist mission in Roviana and ran it until the outbreak of WWII, was concerned with the 'construction of order' and a proponent of the 'industrial mission'. In a short article he asked whether the Christianity the mission offered was;

[134] Eves 1996 p.

Plate 29 “Man and Woman, Rubiana, New Georgia” Rev. George Brown 1899 Royal Geographical Society PR 056650

Plate 30 *banara* Gumi's wife with her children Rev. George Brown 1899 Rautenstrauch Joest Museum 9707_600

Plate 31 *banara* Gumi's wife Rev. George Brown 1899 Rautenstrauch Joest Museum 9712_600

Plate 32 Roviana man with a pierced earlobe. Rev. George Brown 1899 Rautenstrauch Joest Museum 9723

Plate 33 Roviana man with a clock inserted in his pierced earlobe. Rev. George Brown 1899 Rautenstrauch Joest Museum 9733_600

Plate 34 Roviana man with a tobacco tin inserted in his pierced earlobe Rev. George Brown 1899 Rautenstrauch Joest Museum 9731_600

> "merely a creed, and the nominal membership of a human society called the Church, or is it a new vision, new aspirations, and a new power to will and to do - in other words, a new life?...The chief business of the Missionary is not to make boats and plantations but to make men - Christian men. Not to build houses, but to build character."[135]

The photographs that the mission produced were intended to reveal and help construct this "new life", and the phrase continues to be used to end all services of the Christian Fellowship Church in Roviana.[136] The photographs, which were either taken by Goldie or his co-worker Rooney, were intended for audiences in New Zealand and Australia and had a significant impact in raising funds for the mission as well as forming opinions, but they were also distributed locally around Roviana to certain individuals and families and had a considerable impact themselves as material objects and signs of conversion. In many of the photographs the bodies of Roviana people are the sites for the inscription of narratives of conversion.

Photographs such as these (Plates 35 and 36) function as visual narratives of "new life". There is a concern with portraying 'savagery'- even if it is a sub-text which has been effaced - but if that 'savagery' is irreducible then there is no hope of conversion. Goldie commented on Andrew Cheyne's 1844 account of New Georgian cannibalism and the suggestion that "human flesh formed their chief article of diet";[137]

> "The people of the New Georgia group were cannibals, but not in the same sense as the Fijians, who loved human flesh as an article of diet. Those who have taken part in these cannibal feasts tell me that in connexion with human sacrifices and great religious festivals human flesh was partaken of, but few liked it; to many it was so

[135] Goldie 1916 pp.2-3
[136] Harwood 1971. Christian Fellowship Church villages in Roviana are avowedly keen on maintaining *kastom*.
[137] Cheyne quoted in Shineberg 1971 p.

Plate 35 “Mr. Goldie and Roviana Chiefs [Inqava standing second from left] – early converts, old headhunters” 1902-1906 Methodist Archives, Auckland de B16d

Plate 36 “George Videre, Solomon Taveke, Tomothy Ototo, Timothy Loe, Sakaia, India, all sons of headhunters” ca. 1910 Methodist Archives, Auckland de B16c

obnoxious it made them ill. The New Georgians were crafty and cruel; but they were also remarkably clever and intelligent."[138]

Goldie wanted to differentiate Roviana people from 'real savages' who were located elsewhere. This is the difference between the narratives of race in photographs produced by the Methodist mission and those in the images produced by other photographers; Roviana people are not 'savage' by nature, 'savagery' is not essentialised. As far as Goldie was concerned some aspects of Roviana culture were to be condemned, headhunting and cannibalism foremost among them, but others were redeemable. The mission encouraged the building of *tomoko*, despite the attempts of the British colonial authorities to destroy them, and they took part in 'races' at Christmas and other holidays.

There is a also a generational staging in these photographs, although the members of the mission school are dressed in white European shirts and *laplap*, and wear ties, they are all 'sons of headhunters' (Plate 36). The photographs stage an infantilization and Goldie refers to "your new-caught sullen peoples/ half devil and half child".[139] Roviana people are children who can be formed into adults. There is a focus on children, and 'savagery' is related to 'customs' - which can be changed - not to a fixed, essentialized nature. People are 'victims' of these customs, not inherently evil.[140] Goldie thought Roviana people were industrious and divided earlier practices into positive and negative "customs and practices which can be selectively expunged and adapted as the people are assimilated to a Christian order".[141]

The emphasis in a photograph of students lined up for inspection (Plate 37) is the docile, mutable body capable of transformation. The performance is reminiscent of the line-up in front of Thurston's camera (Plate 10), but the racial distinctiveness of ethnographic and other photographic representations is undermined by the hybridity of such transformations. Although the missionaries needed to preserve some of the material

[138] Goldie 1915 p.563
[139] Goldie 1908 p.24
[140] See also Thomas 1994 pp.130-131
[141] Thomas 1993 p.51

Plate 37 “Students at drill on the cricket pitch” Methodist mission, Kokeqolo ca.1910
Methodist Archives, Auckland de B16c

culture of 'heathen times' in order to provide a contrast for before/after stories, this does not participate in the salvage paradigm of other images of Roviana people. This is a "new life". Much of the photography of Roviana constructs an essentialist 'savage' identity, which can then constitute the truth behind any observed or contingent complexities. Hence photographers could compare the appearance of the native, who might seem to act in a friendly manner, with his savage or cannibal essence. Discrepancies did not establish that the European construct of the native's nature might be false, but that any hybridized identity was somehow inauthentic.[142] The mission not only encouraged the continued building of *tomoko* and other forms of material culture it also participated to some extent in Roviana notions of generosity, and in so doing perhaps allowed Goldie to resemble a *banara* like Inqava. The inter-penetration of forms, the 'double-vision' referred to earlier, also resulted in some extraordinary hybrids.

In creating the new Methodist church on Nusa Roviana in the visual style of an ancestral skull shrine (*oru*) (Plates 38) complete with its representations of "eyes" and a "spirit door", the Methodist mission was effectively keeping alive a material memory of the past. As Andrew Lattas has suggested;

> "the process of forgetting can never be complete or total, for Christianity requires a particular memory of the past...in order to objectify and mediate its conquest of subjects through conquering the sites and spaces which mediate and locate their identities."[143]

Photographs, such as those by Thurston (Plate 11) and Goldie (Plate 37), and other representations did not merely create representations that were secondary to practices and realities, but constituted political actualities in themselves. Colonial officials, anthropologists, missionaries and other visitors to Roviana could regard a culture not as an array of practices and relations, but as a thing depicted or described that was immediately subject to their gaze. As Thomas points out;

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[142] See also Thomas 1994 p.36
[143] Lattas 1996b p.297

Plate 38 “Native church, Roviana Island” ca.1920 Methodist Archives, Auckland de B15

"other people and cultures could be subsumed in the form of a picture and seeing a thing first as a representation, and secondly as something beyond a representation created a particular sense of power on the side of the viewing colonist, which was of course not necessarily reflected in real control over populations."[144]

Gele Aranga

There are signs of resistance that can be read in photographs of Roviana people. One of the photographs Williamson took in Roviana in 1910 (Plate 39) shows an encounter on one of the lagoon's beaches, between him and a Roviana man; a warrior (*tie varane*). Is this Williamson's "authentic savagery"? The image of a man with a shield and spear facing the camera appeared in many colonial depictions of Roviana. It underwrote the textual accounts of 'savagery' and provided a visual index of difference but, as suggested earlier, the photograph may have been the result of negotiations in which Roviana people knew what was required of them. The balance of power involved in any negotiation seems less certain in this instance though.

One of the dozen or so photographs that Faletau Leve, a Roviana man in his 70's, has in his possession shows his wife, Daisy, their first son Alpheus, and an old man, Boaz Sisilo, holding a wicker shield (*lave*) and a spear (Plate 40). The photograph is housed in a homemade wooden frame. Sisilo was a relative of Daisy's, and a prominent chief (*palabatu*), and is standing in a pose called *gele aranga*, 'aiming'. This involved holding the spear in an over-arm grip ready to throw, the shield in front of the body, making small jumping movements back and forth, and distracting and fixing your opponents with "fierce eyes". The aim of "fierce eyes" was not just to intimidate those facing you, but to "look beside them", to look slightly to one side then the other to confuse them about your intentions. Faletau said that this movement helped you see "clearer". He also asserted that the eyes in the photograph could watch you - they were watching us as we spoke.

[144] Thomas 1994 p.112 See also Heidegger 1977

Plate 39 Roviana man with shield and spear. R.W.Williamson. 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute 78615

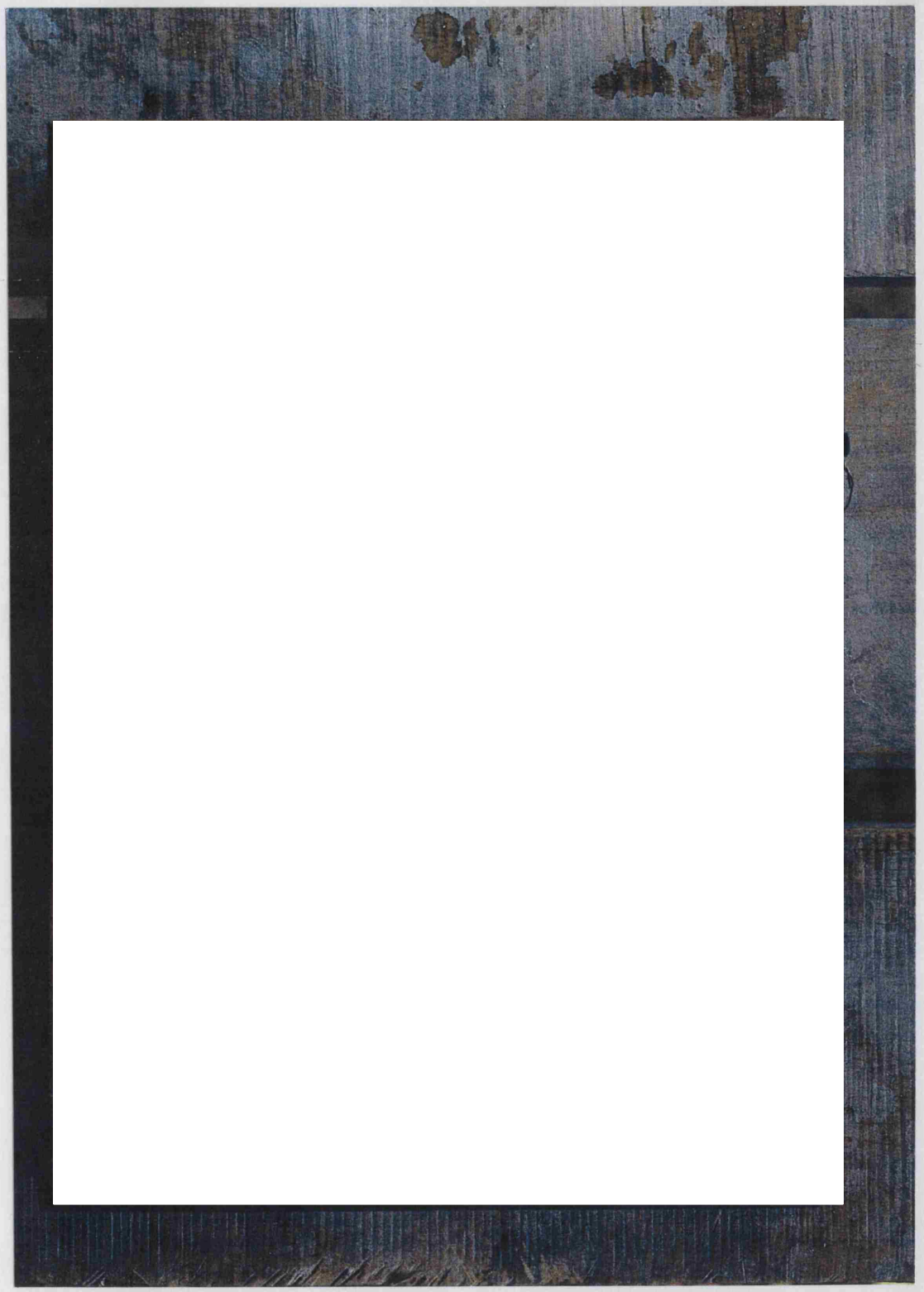

Plate 40 Boaz Sisilo, Daisy and Alpheus. Faletau Leve ca.1970

Gele aranga was a pose adopted in fighting and dancing, and many photographs of Roviana The photograph was taken by Faletau on his Box Brownie sometime around 1970, he was vague on the exact date. He told me he had asked Sisilo to "actim", to adopt a pose of some kind, when he took the photograph in Ovea village on Vella Lavella. According to Faletau, Sisilo stood in the *gele aranga* pose to make himself "come out strong". The text on the photograph, handwritten by Faletau, records that; "Today me and the old man [Sisilo] talked about the bush [uncleared land] between Ovea and the Pirara river...He gave me something..." Today Faletau retains land rights around Ovea village as a result of the transaction memorialised by this photograph. He gave Sisilo a knife, of foreign make, and money, both shell-valuables (*bakiha*) and dollars, in return for access to land. He also later gave Sisilo a painting based on his pose in the photograph. The old man had promised the shield - which allegedly had bloodstains on it from headhunting raids on Choiseul - to Faletau on his death. But he hid the shield shortly before he died, and Faletau never received it. Faletau's account of the photograph of Sisilo forces a reconsideration of the Williamson image. That the *gele aranga* pose, which is now revealed as that adopted by the Roviana man in Williamson's image, was a prominent feature of colonial imaging, but also a Roviana form of presentation, demonstrates the complexity of a visual economy that connects London and Roviana. Bhabha has argued that;

> "the place of difference and otherness, or the space of the adversarial...is never entirely on the outside or implacably oppositional. It is a pressure, and a presence, that acts constantly, if unevenly, along the entire boundary of authorization"[145]

The eyes of the man in Williamson's photograph "look beside" viewers of the image, and "beside" Williamson as the photographer. The eyes are, in Faletau's description of *gele aranga*, ones "that bite".

[145] Bhabha 1994 p.120

2. "A Devil's Engine"

Snow

Large flakes of snow fall to the ground which has already been blanketed by a thin white layer (Plate 41). Their slow erratic movement has been suspended by the camera. It is seductively easy to visualize the snow continue to fall. It is also easy to describe this "paltry paper sign"[1] as if it were the event rather than its mediation. The photograph was taken by Clarinda, a teenager from Ilangana (a hamlet of Munda), when she was a scholarship student studying medicine in New Zealand in 2000. That night in Christchurch was the first time she had experienced snow and her mother, Voli, tells me that she took the photograph because she wanted to share her excitement with her parents and family back home. Voli shows me handwritten letters from Clarinda in which she describes the photographs she sends back as a way of "keeping in touch". The physical connotations are important. Before she left, her father, Isaac, had brought her a cheap Japanese automatic camera from one of the Chinese stores in Honiara with just that purpose in mind. Other photographs in the album (Plate 42) sent home by Clarinda show moments recorded by her friends – sitting with a boyfriend playing computer games at a console in a Christchurch arcade, with her stuffed toys in her university dormitory room, in a café with friends...

Sitting with Voli on the floor of her house close to the lagoon's edge passing photographs back and forth to each other, asking questions, and telling stories. There seems to be something immediately recognisable and reassuring about these objects and this process. Laughing about snow while sweating in the all-consuming heat and humidity of early afternoon and has sent people searching for shade in which to sit and talk. The kinds of

[1] Tagg 1984 p.12

Plate 41 Snow in Christchurch, New Zealand. Clarinda

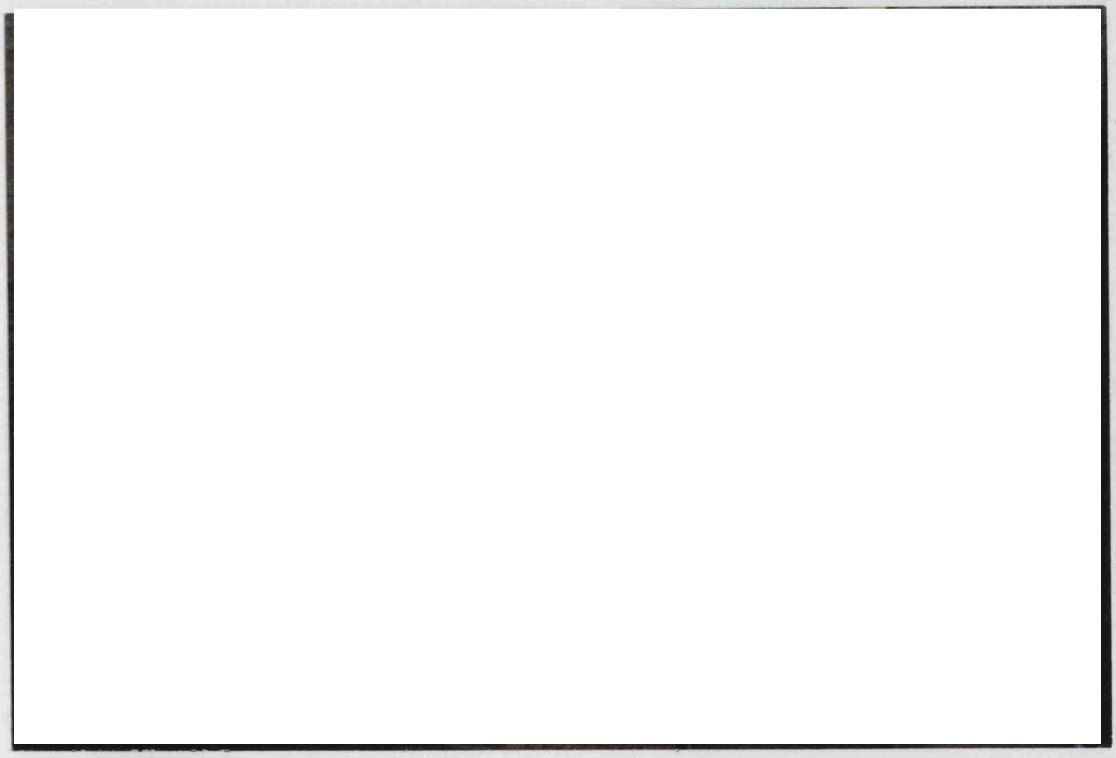

Plate 42 Clarinda's album.

'contact' that are facilitated by these photographs, "*maqomaqo*"[2] as Voli calls them, are clearly of great value to her. They are rituals of family - a way of being connected.[3] They provoke laughter and tears.

But what kinds of connections do they establish? Why speak of them as performing this task? They connect Clarinda and Voli with wider 'worlds'. With the 'modern' world of photography and photographic consumption - a world that is elsewhere and yet also here. A great many of the photographs that Roviana people possess come from elsewhere. It has been argued that photography is a central feature of modernity as a technology that fosters a specific set of attitudes towards the world,[4] and these kinds of 'personal' photographs in particular have;

> "developed as a medium through which individuals confirm and explore their identity, that sense of self-identity which is an indispensable feature of a modern sensibility – for in Western urban culture it is as individuals that people have come to experience themselves – independently of their role as family members or as occupying a recognised social position."[5]

How has photography impacted on the lives of Roviana people? Why is there any perceived need to archive the self? Pierre Bourdieu has written about the inhabitants of a small French village who declared that they had no need to photograph each other because "we've seen each other too many times already".[6] Why do Roviana villagers feels any need to photograph themselves?

Edmund Carpenter has argued that photography brought with it a new sense of individuality when it was first encountered by some Papua New Guinean cultures in the

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[2] *Maqomaqo* 'shadow' or 'soul', is a Roviana term which is commonly used to refer to a photograph. Its complexities will be dealt with later.
[3] They are also, of course, a way for me to establish connections, in the same way that other visitors to Voli's house are told similar stories.
[4] Slater 1995
[5] Holland 1997 p.108
[6] Bourdieu 1990 p.34

1960's.[7] It created a sense of the detached individual separate from the "seamless web of kinship and responsibility".[8] Has photography induced what Carpenter refers to as the "tribal terror of self- awareness" in Roviana?[9] Something that appears so mundane, so everyday, and yet on which so much depends. Has it atomised Roviana culture? How am I to deal with this artefact and understand it in any ethnographic sense? What does this 'ordinary' object reveal of Roviana?

Within accepted Euro-American understandings of photography this image of snow falling is seemingly simple to comprehend; visually - we know what the photograph is of; processually - we know what the photograph is; and socially - a daughter in a foreign land 'staying in touch'. This photograph falls easily within the genres of 'family', 'snapshot', or 'personal' photography - the vast Euro-American project of photographic self-archiving. There is a sense in which photographs exert themselves over subjects, ask them to do their bidding, rather the other way around. Photography asks subjects to define themselves in relation to itself - an extension of its body,[10] and its' ability to disperse or collect.

But any apparent legibility is deceptive here. There is a white 'fog' in the photograph that obscures our vision. On closer inspection a small figure is just visible in the distance - silhouetted against the streetlights - the form is hard to distinguish because of the blurred shape (although 'shape' seems too concrete a term for something so formless) that fills what is apparently the middle ground of the photograph. This nebulous apparition and the accompanying lack of visual clarity is particularly unsettling for Roviana people. Rather than being seen as the effect of light and optics, the indistinct white fog - along with blurring, double-exposure, and many other photographic 'accidents' - is the work of malevolent spirits. Voli tells me that;

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[7] Carpenter 1995
[8] ibid. p.488
[9] ibid
[10] See Batchen 2004a

"In this [the photograph] you can see the spirits [*debil-debil*]. They are there. That is why the photograph comes out like this."[11]

The white fog in the photograph is evidence of the presence of spirits. It relates to reality in the same way that Rosalind Krauss suggested that the photograph is as trace, comparing it to a fingerprint or the rings of water left on tables by cold glasses or the tracks of birds on beaches.[12] Clarinda was deeply unhappy during the period in which she took the photograph and for Voli - and for many other Roviana people who talked about their own photographs that were blurred or indistinct in a similar way - there is a direct connection between this inner turmoil, the malevolent activity of spirits, and the physical manifestation of the photograph. They are inextricably and causally entangled. This Roviana understanding of photography - not a mis-understanding - demonstrates both points of connection, and differences with Euro-American models. What other explanations, technical or otherwise, could be provided for the white fog within the diversity of Euro-American photographic traditions? I want to raise the possibility of other understandings of photographs and photography and not presume a unified universal photography, a 'nature', that is the same across cultures. But neither do I want to discount any similarities of practice. The previous chapter explored the ways in which Roviana was photographically imagined by outsiders of different kinds. Now I want to look at Roviana attitudes and practices. The indexical status of the photograph was the defining feature of colonial uses of photography in Roviana in the late 19th and early 20th century. What are local expectations of the medium? What is at stake is the possibility of a range of vernacular practices - a Roviana photography - in relation to any universal notion of photography.

Photographs are a scarce resource in Roviana. Although Roviana people take photographs themselves, many come from elsewhere - from family and friends in Honiara or further afield in Australia and New Zealand. Compared to Americans, who

[11] *Debil-debil* is a pijin term that refers to dangerous and malevolent spirits usually referred to as *tomate* in Roviana. Voli 26.4.01
[12] Krauss 1985 p.110

take 550 snapshots per second,[13] the numbers of photographs owned by Roviana people is miniscule. Although a few families have albums containing fifty or more photographs, others have only two or three. Individual photographs, like those taken by Clarinda and her friends, reveal Roviana ideas about photography's relation to the world and how they conceive of that world. In order to understand this relation we need to look at the history of relations between Roviana people and the camera. Although I have made a distinction between the imaginings of Europeans, dealt with in the preceding chapter, and Roviana practices, these are interconnected narratives. Their history of photography cannot be separated from Euro-American ones.[14] Connecting at points and diverging at others, the two practices form an interconnected network rather than two separate worlds.

What is photography's "regime of value" in Roviana?[15] Christine Jourdan has argued that in the Solomon Islands "the consumption of Western goods has undoubtedly contributed to the individualization of social life".[16] What role has photography played in this process? Photographs represent a strange case – they are locally produced, but are a Euro-American technology. Do they inevitably bring with them a "Western metaphysic" as James Weiner has argued in relation to all indigenous appropriations of Euro-American media?[17]

The alternative to this binary logic is that photography itself has a metaphysic that is specific to its technology.[18] Rather than a distinctly 'Western' metaphysic that is imposed on Roviana, perhaps it is the case of a technological metaphysic that both 'the West' and Roviana are equally subject to?

Jourdan suggests that all material culture in the Solomon Islands is placed on a nature-culture continuum – those closer to nature are less valuable, those closer to culture more

[13] See Batchen 2004b p. 8
[14] See Gutman 1982
[15] Appadurai 1986 p.57
[16] Jourdan and Philibert 1996 p.72
[17] Weiner 1997
[18] This existence of a photographic identity is central to the arguments of Tagg 1988 and Batchen 1997

valuable.[19] Jourdan suggests that Western goods are actually closer to the nature end of this scale because they are ultimately replaceable, whereas certain traditional ritual goods (in this case Malaitan wooden clubs handed down from generation to generation) are not, and are therefore closer to the culture end. Video-cassette-recorders are left un-repaired and broken fridges are used for general storage. Where do photographs fit on this scale?

It is difficult to establish an originating point for the first photograph taken by a Roviana person. I came across no photographs taken by Roviana people before the 1950's, but this does not mean that they did not exist. Roviana people have had contact with photography from the latter half of the 19th century onwards, but most people I spoke to thought it unlikely that any of their ancestors had taken photographs before 1920. The lack of any surviving early material makes such tasks a matter of conjecture. In exploring the relationship of Roviana people to photography I do develop an historical context and suggest some broad periodisations, but my focus is more on Roviana attitudes towards photography and with tracing the contours of contemporary vernacular practices, than with fixing an originating point. The stories Roviana people told me about their photographs are personal ones and are inseparable from biographies and I have chosen to preserve those contexts.[20]

I start by considering outsiders accounts' of early encounters between Roviana and other western Solomons people and photography. I then contrast these with local versions and begin to trace the development of various Roviana photographic practices and contemporary uses of the medium. There are several different registers for approaching the kinds of photographic objects I am concerned with here. They can be considered in terms of technical process, biography, social use, oral history, or iconography. But, in exploring a range of Roviana people's encounters with, and contemporary uses of, photography, I am primarily concerned with beginning to establish what Roviana people think photography <u>is</u>. Voli's reactions to Clarinda's photograph demonstrates the

[19] Jourdan and Philibert 1996 p.56
[20] See Holland 1997 p.142 fro the importance of distinguishing between the historians use of personal photographs, and the 'users' approach

importance of local expectations of photography to any understanding of their role in Roviana culture.

First Contact

Gananath Obeyesekere has criticised anthropological interpretations of first contact narratives in the Pacific for the way they assume a certain conceptual shock on the part of islanders, and for assumptions that foreigners would necessarily be treated as 'gods'.[21] But, with their long history of dealing with a range of 'others' from across the sea, we should not assume that photography's initial reception in New Georgia was conceptually overwhelming. Christine Dureau has contrasted three narratives of first contact from Simbo; one written by Lt. John Shortland in 1799, another recorded by the anthropologist Arthur Hocart in 1908, and one she recorded herself in 1990.[22]

John Stockdale's 1789 compilation of Shortland's first encounter with Simbo people talks of how the islanders were the ones who initiated contact with the ship in order to trade. For a substantial period after first-contact and into the 19th century, European traders were to some extent co-opted into local standards of exchange and participate in local networks rather than exert any kind of dominance of their own.[23] Europeans were quickly assimilated into the material world of trade rather than being treated as divine beings. At this point New Georgians retained a large degree of autonomy and control over trade. The *tie vaka* needed to re-supply - at this point one of the main reasons for ships stopping in the area - and required friendly trading relations in order to do so. As Dureau points out, "the pre-pacification period was characterized by accommodation rather than rupture, the shifts entailed in incorporation were gradual, the degree of dependence obscured".[24]

[21] Obeyesekere 1985.
[22] Dureau 2001.
[23] See also Shineberg 1971 and Bennett 1987.
[24] Dureau 2001 p.142.

The British anthropologist Arthur Hocart recorded a first contact narrative in Simbo in 1908 which reflects the shift in power relations that had occurred by this point. In the account given to Hocart the Simbo people are afraid and uneasy of *tie vaka.*[25] In both Stockdale's and Hocart's accounts Simbo people want iron, but for Dureau, Hocart's account reflects the domination of local people that was achieved through 'pacification' during the four years after the declaration of the Solomon Islands as a British Protectorate in 1896. The passivity ascribed to Simbo people in their account given to Hocart reflected their current state of domination and dependence rather than their position at first contact.

The account of first contact that Dureau herself recorded in 1990 concerned the arrival of the mission (*lotu*) and described how its arrival had brought a period of peace, although this was not actually the case as violence and raiding continued for some time after the arrival of South Sea Islander missionaries of the Methodist Mission in 1903. The narrative of *lotu* requires an image of a savage past and the first contact account reflects this, emphasizing the suspicion and aggression with which the first missionaries were met. Local history is divided into before and after *lotu*, and is not concerned with first contact. Dureau reports that Hocart's account was irrelevant to Simbo people in 1990.[26] The coming of the mission is "a contact story that acts as an origin story",[27] and the idea of a savage and hostile response to the arrival of the mission is in keeping with Missionary discourses, which require a particular memory of the past.[28]

The first contact accounts discussed by Dureau reveal moments of change and the power relations involved in "a history of cultural development characterized by shifts from autonomy through defeat and resentment to acceptance of European hegemony."[29] But in terms of local reactions to the material culture of outsiders, as Dureau discusses in a footnote, there is a strange circularity in the discussion of the desire for iron items. Is the expression of knowledge about iron and its uses in Stockdale's account evidence that this was not actually first contact? As Nicholas Thomas argues, what was given in exchange

[25] Dureau 2001 p.141.
[26] Dureau 2001 p.
[27] Dureau 2001 p.153
[28] See also Lattas 1996

by one side was almost certainly not what was received by the other side.[30] What was exchanged was mediated by the cultural categories of each side. How does this relate to the reception of photography?

Several popular travel books and anthropologists accounts of the western Solomons from the late 19th and early 20th century refer to local people's initial reactions to photography. These stories about native encounters with cameras, gramophones, and radios form a sub-genre of first contact narratives. The new technology is synonymous with the strange figure of the white man and the modern world. But, although they strive towards producing and clearly differentiating the 'modern' and the 'primitive', such accounts are often full of inherent ambiguities.[31]

Alongside their overt or covert narratives of technological superiority they are also attempts to displace fears about technology onto others. Ostensibly concerned with the natives' shock of encountering the new technology - the 'primitive' reactions of others - these narratives reveal an uneasiness about the medium of photography. Playing out the spectacle of shock in the space of the other. The intended amusement at the misunderstanding of others is an attempt to construct a distance from them and dispel that uneasiness.

Historical accounts of first contact between Europeans and western Solomons peoples reveal that the latter did not consider outsiders to possess any particular supernatural status, they were not 'spirit people' or 'ghosts'. [32] There was a long history of dealing with outsiders of various kinds and these light-skinned visitors were just one more 'people' who could be engaged with through the normal relations of trading and headhunting. As we have already noted, in Roviana the common term for European visitors was *tie vaka*, literally 'people of the ship', and this continues to be the common term for white people. It implies that Europeans are outsiders in the sense that they come from elsewhere, but

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[29] Dureau 2001 p.155
[30] Thomas 1991 pp.83-124
[31] Moore 2000
[32] Scheffelin and Crittenden 1991

they are people, *tie*, not some supernatural beings. First encounters with photography need to be treated in the same way as other first contact narratives; it is necessary to consider the particular constellations and differentials of power and agency that are involved in each case.

The photographs taken in 1893-4 by Henry Somerville when he visited Roviana and Marovo Lagoon appear to suggest a very relaxed local reaction to the camera,[33] but the attitudes of Roviana people to photography recorded by Robert Williamson during his time there in May 1910 are more ambiguous;

> "the attitude of the simple Rubiana people towards the camera was variable. Very few indeed had ever seen such a thing before, or knew what it meant, and some of them were frightened, the women sometimes rushing with loud shrieks into the bush. But I rarely had difficulty in getting groups. I found it a good plan to direct the camera to some distinctive object, and persuade some brave souls to put their heads under the cloth and see the picture on the focussing plate. This was the cause of wild excitement; and these bolder spirits then aided me in adducing someone to stand before the camera...I am sure the people often realised in a general way that I was making pictures of them, though I suspect their idea was that the picture which they saw was that which would remain. At times so popular has been the camera, that for the sake of justice and peace I have had solemnly to photograph everybody, and thus produce general contentment, unalloyed by knowledge of the fact that in many cases the operation was but a dummy one."[34]

By the time Williamson is writing Roviana people would certainly have some knowledge of photography even if they had not all encountered it directly. As we have seen in the previous chapter visiting and resident Europeans had been taking photographs in and around Roviana for many years. In suggesting that "very few indeed had ever seen such a thing before", Williamson may be talking about the reactions of people from the eastern

[33] See Plate 23 in Chapter 1
[34] Williamson 1914 p.31-32.

end of Roviana lagoon who may have had less first-hand contact with photography. He certainly replicates the general assumptions that visiting Europeans had about the kinds of knowledge 'savages' might possess, and there is an allied assumption that once they know what photography is they will lose their fear. However, the implied contrast with a 'rational' Europe is spurious. In mid-nineteenth century Euro-American vernacular photographic practices a sense of unease was a general feature of attitudes towards the medium, existing alongside more 'scientific' approaches. Williamson's account suggests that local attitudes to the camera consisted of a mixture of fear and amusement, and this is also true of contemporary Roviana attitudes towards photography. The trick that Williamson plays on the 'unsuspecting natives' demonstrates the importance of the ritual of photography and his suggestion that he had to photograph everybody seems to contradict his description of the fear the apparatus induced. Nordström reports that in late nineteenth century Samoans were very keen to have their photographs taken, but suggests that this desire is the product of a long history of sustained contact with Euro-Americans.[35] Count Festetics von Tolna attempted to photograph people in Munda sometime around 1900, but records that while his wife, the Countess, was talking to "King Ingava" his attempts to take a photograph of people were thwarted because "all the natives are hiding in their houses because they are afraid of the camera [*l'appareil photographique*]" (Plate 43).[36]

The accounts of Williamson and von Tolna stress the fear induced by the new technology of photography, and it is precisely photography's status as a <u>new</u> form that is at issue here. It seems that the camera was the subject of fear on occasions, and of amusement and novelty on others. But, whereas Williamson asserts that most local people did not know what photography "meant", I would argue that photography <u>was</u> understood in local terms and assumed a place in the inter-ocular field of Roviana. This does not mean that it was not subject to a certain amount of fear - but that fear was an existing feature of various local representational practices. Other accounts of reactions to photography

[35] Nordström 1991 p. 14
[36] Festetics von Tolna 1903 p.325

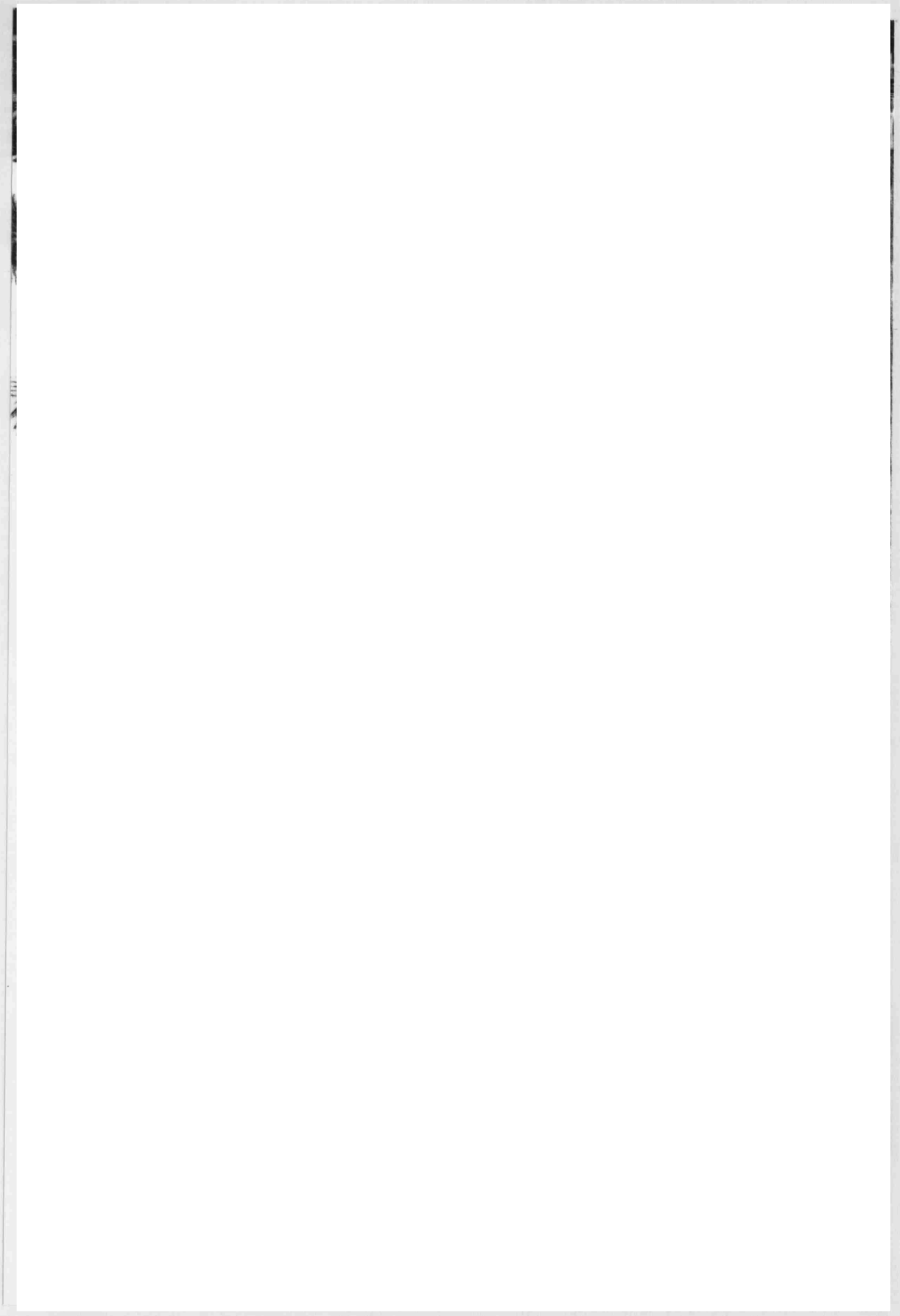

Plate 43 Sisiata village. ca.1900. From Festetics von Tolna 1903

suggest a more knowledgeable attitude by local people. Hocart recorded the attitudes of Simbo people to photography a few years before Williamson visited Roviana;

> "among photos they certainly preferred human subjects, but even this could not fix their attention for long; they noticed chiefly the arm-rings and such ornaments; naked savages provoked their mirth. They liked to recognize someone, and when the news spread of Njiruviri's picture in The Discovery of the Solomons, people were continually coming to see it. For portraits they had little interest and liked full-length figures. They declared our half-plate camera was good but the quarter-plate was no good and it was with trouble that Njiruviri was induced to be photographed with the latter. In looking at pictures they turned them often upside down as the right way up, yet they always noticed that the image in the camera was upside down."[37]

None of the commentators of first contact with photography report the kind of conceptual inability to actually 'see' or 'read' photographs that Anthony Forge reports was the case amongst the Abelam of Papua New Guinea.[38] Hocart is writing in 1908 so this is not a story of first contact, and he is also writing about the reactions of Simbo people, who might arguably be said to have had a longer history of sustained contact with Europeans. Although, by the first decade of the 20th century the focus of attention had shifted to Roviana, Simbo had previously been the centre of European activity.[39] But Hocart's account seems to suggest that there was a lack of interest in photographs, that they could not hold people's attention for long. Despite ignoring their orientation (holding photographs upside down), people recognised what photographs are and what they 'meant'. The dislike of head and shoulder portraits remains a pervading feature of much contemporary Roviana photographic practice.

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[37] Hocart n.d. no page number. I will come back to another account of Simbo people's reaction to photography recorded by Hocart in the next chapter.
[38] Forge 1970
[39] Bennett 1986

As was the case in Euro-American reactions to the medium, a mixture of anxiety and fear, but also novelty and entertainment were common features of initial Roviana reactions to photography. Cameras were only one of a range of optical devices that Roviana people would have encountered in their dealings with outsiders as this passage from Williamson reveals;

> "A still greater joy to them [than his compass] was my pocket magnifying-glass. Under my instructions they looked through it at their hands, at hairs from their heads, at pieces of cloth, seeds, shells, everything they could get hold of: and indeed, so popular was this new wonder-toy that I began to fear that I should not be able to get it back again. These things would undoubtedly be regarded by the people as implements of magic, and would necessarily enhance the importance and presumable power of the man who possessed and manipulated them."[40]

Like other optical technologies such as field-glasses, telescopes, microscopes[41], surveying instruments, etc. that Roviana people may have encountered in their dealings with outsiders, photography reveals new worlds. [42] The Methodist missionary Rev. George Brown talked about the powerful reaction of Roviana people to the magic-lantern shows he gave them when he visited in 1901.[43] But Williamson's description of local reactions to his magnifying-glass suggests not only the revelation of a new world for Roviana people, but the connection made between such devices and magic and power. I will return to this connection later.

These European accounts of early encounters with photography reveal much about the expectations of their authors and presumptions about local knowledge - they assume a superiority. But they also suggest the plurality of local reactions to photography. I want

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[40] Williamson 1914 p.25.
[41] Woodford was also a botanist and a geographer and took microscope sand other surveying devices with him when he visited Roviana in 1886.
[42] See also Screech 1996 on Japanese reactions to European optical devices. See also Benjamin 1985, 1992: Jay1988; Slater 1995
[43] See also Landau 1994 on the reaction of people to Euro-American representations.

now to contrast these accounts with some I recorded in and around Roviana in 2000-2001.

The White Man's Devil

> "The first time they saw a camera they thought it was a devil's engine (*enjin blong debil*). [laughing] It was the white man's devil. They were scared. They thought it would take (*kasem*) them, so they ran away. They were frightened and they ran away. They hid in the bush. Now we know these things [gesturing at my camera]."[44]

This account of first contact, given in a mixture of English by a Roviana woman in her 70's, included certain pijin words thrown in for dramatic effect; as though this was what 'they' would say. It contains the basic elements of a story often repeated by Roviana people who consider themselves to be familiar with photography. These stories, all of which figure some constellation formed from a basic set of elements - the scared native, the knowing white man, the mysterious 'capturing' device etc. - are often recounted with a sense of humour. They are historically vague and occur "before", as in "before *lotu*", but generally meant in the sense of "people from before" rather than actually occurring before the arrival of the Methodist mission in 1902. The laughter attempts to establish a distance between the narrator and their incredulous, less-knowing, superstitious, and pagan ancestors. The narrator, Josephine Wheatley, recalls that her Roviana ancestors were afraid of the camera when they first encountered the strange object in the hands of missionaries, locally-based expatriate traders, or other outsiders some time in the late 19th or early 20th century. Such stories, like other first-contact narratives, have an almost mythic quality and serve to establish a temporal and cultural shift between 'now' and 'before'.

[44] Josephine Wheatley 23.1.01.

Although the encounter Josephine describes might have occurred after the arrival of the Methodist mission in Roviana in 1902, her memory of the term *debil* being used is not necessarily an indication of any direct mission influence. *Debil* is a pijin word which is used to refer to *tomate*, spirits of various kinds, and was already in common use before the mission arrived. However, the allusion to the camera as a "devil's engine" does reveal the use of a foreign word, *enjin*, which is seemingly without any local equivalent. What 'engines' existed in Roviana culture? Despite the fact that stories like Josephine's are in some ways anecdotal - they describe a generic type of encounter and not necessarily any one specific historical event - that she recalls this particular phrase being used in the oral accounts of the 'time before' that have handed down to her is revealing. What is intended in describing the camera as an engine?

From the late 1700s onwards Roviana people might have at least known about various European technologies, such as optical devices like telescopes, and certainly later would have encountered steam engines onboard European ships. Bennett suggests that the first iron tools were seen by islanders as having *mana* - did the same apply to photographs?[45] Perhaps the use of the term 'engine' in this context emphasises the efficacious nature of the camera - an engine that produces things. Or perhaps it simply reveals the lack of a word such as 'technology' as a way of describing it? Trachtenberg points out that inception of Daguerreotypes in 1840's Europe was referred to as the invention of a "great engine".[46] He suggests that;

> "the camera does resemble a machine with moving parts, a polished glass eye, a mysterious chemical procedure...but 'engine' resonates or rumbles with other senses. By the 1840's, the word had evolved from the simple sense of a product of ingenuity to the more complex modern sense of a self-powered machine, a self-contained mechanical entity requiring no external power."[47]

[45] Bennett 1986 p.23
[46] Trachentberg 1992 p.184
[47] ibid.

He goes on to argue that the figure of the camera as 'engine' "hum[s] with wariness about what living energy may lie within the camera-made image, what latent magic the image might perform".[48]Local expectations of power concern efficacy and the ability to effect appearances and conversions, and photography is a process that is connected to this economy of power. This productive capacity coexists with the camera's ability to take things, it is capable of 'catching you'. The types of camera used in the late nineteenth century with their luminous ground-glass screens inverting the scene before the lens, and the accompanying paraphernalia of the black hood and the strange chemical baths, may all have contributed to a Roviana understanding of photography as an essentially magical process.[49] It was certainly popularly perceived as such during its 'infancy' in Europe and North America, and the act of taking a photograph with the equipment used at the time had many elements of ritual about it.[50] The magical ability to take things and to mediate between the seen and the unseen world was a prominent feature of early Roviana reactions to photography. The assumption that photography was seen as Euro-American 'magic', on the basis that there were no local equivalents for it, is spurious. My argument is that there were local contexts for understanding photography, and that it was not feared because it was something new and modern - and therefore misunderstood - but was recognised as connected to existing 'engines of visualization'[51] and local expectations of mediation, efficacy, and power. Josephine continues;

> "You were told to shut your mouth when you had your photograph taken. Otherwise your spirit would come out and be taken.[52] People did not want to look directly at the camera for the same reason. People wore perfume to have their photo taken [laughing]."[53]

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[48] ibid. p.185
[49] See Williamson's account above
[50] See Trachtenberg 1989b
[51] Maynard 1997
[52] Carpenter (1995) reports a similar action of covering the mouth among people who first encounter the camera in Papua New Guinea
[53] Buckley 2000 reports the joking stories told by Gambians about naïve people from the country who come to town and wear perfume to have their photographs taken.

This suggests that Roviana people had a certain reflexive awareness of their position in a world historical scheme. For this reason, Josephine is not enacting a similar distancing to that which occurs in European accounts of native fear and incredulity when initially encountering photography. Accounts which seek to establish the native's primitive beliefs as inferior to their own modern knowledge. In the context of my questions to Roviana people about early attitudes towards photography, many of these narratives were intended to reveal the extent to which 'they' - the Roviana people of today - are not like 'them' - the Roviana people of 'before'. The stories function as temporal and cultural markers of difference. However, other Roviana people were far more ambivalent about the potential dangers of photography and were more serious in their narration of early encounters.

> "The photograph is a dangerous thing. Devils stop there [are in the photograph]. If you have a photograph you have to try to come out good. When people first saw the camera (*kamera*) they were afraid it would take their shadow (*maqomaqo*). This is what the camera does. It takes your shadow. You have to be careful.[54]

Many contemporary Roviana people continue to express uneasiness about certain aspects of photography. To be photographed involves a sense of exposure, of vulnerability to the attention and actions of predatory spirits. As Eric Michaels points out in his discussion of photography in relation to contemporary Australian Aboriginal communities;

> "Traditional peoples' first encounters with photography sometimes lead them to conclude that the camera is a dangerous magical instrument capable of stealing some essential part of their being, causing illness or death. Generally such anecdotes are not explained but get filed away with other exotic superstitions held by curious primitives, leaving these people to sort out their own relationship to cameras, photographs, film, and now video."[55]

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[54] Sesolo Makoni 8.4.01
[55] Michaels 1994 p.1

In exploring some of the reactions to photography in Roviana my concern is to consider this relationship in terms of contemporary photographic practices. Indigenous accounts of such encounters are a means of explaining the present as much as they form any commentary on the past. Joyce Kevisi, an elderly Roviana woman, remembered that:

> "When we were young we wondered how they could make this thing [holding photograph]. We said that the Europeans (*tie vaka*) were very clever. We called them shadows (*maqomaqo*), but now we call them pictures (*pikisa*) because we just follow, just like we call a plate a *peleta*. I was very shy when they took my photograph. I am still shy today. My photograph is ugly (*dono hikare*). They asked me to relax but I could not do it. I do not know how to stand in front of a camera (*kamera*). I do not want to be photographed (*kamkamera*[56])."[57]

Joyce has never owned or used a camera.

Fear of photography is not limited to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Donald Maepio's photograph of his uncle Philip Lomae (centre), and Donald's sister Flore on right, and Voli on left (Plate 44) reveals that these anxieties persisted, certainly for older generations of Roviana people. Philip had just been discharged from hospital in Honiara having just been diagnosed with terminal cancer. He died several weeks after this photograph was taken. Philip had not let anyone taken his photograph. Donald was the first and only person who was allowed to photograph him. He only relented because he wanted to "leave something behind him". He did not let people take photographs because he was afraid of what they would do with the photograph and "he did not want them to look at him" (note "him", not "photograph of him"). According to Donald, this, and not the realisation of his impending death, is why he looks unhappy in the photograph. This is the only photograph of him.

[56] Literally to be 'camera-ed'.
[57] Joyce Kevisi, Kokeqolo 19/10/00

Plate 44 Philip Lomae. Photograph by Donald Maepio 1979.

Josephine continued her account of people's reaction to photography by recounting at some length the story of a relative called Punai Leve. Punai was born sometime around 1880 and died in the 1960's so her account provides a history of Roviana reactions to photography over the period from around 1900 to the 1960's. It also concerns local reactions to Hocart. The account was given in English with the odd pijin or Roviana term used for effect. For Roviana people, history does not exist outside of the actions and accounts of individuals, so I will use this local idiom to consider the development of attitudes towards photography.

> "Hocart wore a loin cloth like local people. He also chewed betel. So whenever Punai went to visit him he took betel. Punai thought Hocart's eyes were like a sting-rays. When I was young he told me that when he first saw Hocart's camera he thought that "a *debil-debil* comes out of that engine, and all the souls are inside. If you take a photograph you take their spirit" Punai told me this. The photo can take your *maqomaqo* [soul, shadow...]. He did not want his photograph taken. He was scared...
>
> The British-born trader Norman Wheatley had a basic darkroom in his house. He showed people photographs and he took lots of photographs of people here. People learnt about photographs from him. Sometimes he took photographs of old people and if they died people said he had taken their spirit. They did not like it and they were angry with Norman. Punai knew Hocart and worked for him while he was here in Roviana. One man on Nusa Roviana was photographed by Hocart and he also took this man's genealogy. The man died and then people were worried about talking to Hocart. People liked Hocart's pens and glasses. Hocart's genealogy was used in the court case.[58] Hocart wrote a note for Punai to take to Norman's store. He told Punai that the paper could 'talk'. Punai was scared and held the note carefully. When he got to the store Norman read the paper and told Punai what Hocart had said. Punai did not know how this happened...

[58] See Schnieder 1996

> Punai used to listen to the radio at Kitchener's [Kitchener was Josephine's husband and Norman's son] and he heard them when they put monkeys in space. He did not believe it. When I was young I was told to count to ten when I was having my photograph taken. We had to do things again for the camera. I was in lots of mission photographs. I like to have my photo taken. When I was young we were so proud of photos we would display them in the house. Now all I see here is photos of Tom Cruise. People do not make the family photos we grew up with. I often look through my old photos on my own, but sometime I show friends...
>
> When I lived on the island [Hopei] on my own I used to look at my old photos. This made Kitchener's ghost appear. My wedding photo was taken by Bishop Wade. We did not get the photos until a year later. I used to have a box-brownie. Daisy's father, Gasimata, brought a camera off Norman Wheatley. He wanted to take photographs of all his daughters. When the prints came back from Australia all you could see were coconuts. He had pointed the camera in the wrong direction. "Take a photograph like Gasimata" was how we used to describe a bad photograph."[59]

It is uncertain when Roviana people started taking photographs themselves. Norman Wheatley, who had started out in Roviana in 1892 as an agent for the Williams, Woodhouse & Kelly partnership on Nusa Zonga island, married a local woman, Nuatali, and acquired land at Lambete in Munda. He had planted coconuts and set up house there by 1900 and this is where he set up a darkroom. Norman was an active participant in local networks of exchange, and it's possible that the first photographs by Roviana people were taken under his guidance in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Josephine recalls that Ellen, Norman's daughter was trained by him to use the darkroom. Although European members of the Methodist mission took numerous photographs of local people (as we have seen in the previous chapter), they did not actively encourage Roviana people to pick up the camera themselves. Other than posing for the camera, and being given a print, no-one I spoke to could remember any of their relatives being involved

[59] Josephine Wheatley, Dunde 15/3/01.

with photography through the auspices of the mission. This does not mean to say that the effects of being literally exposed to its workings through the ritual of being photographed were not substantial. Josephine remembers that Norman used to take photographs of local *banara* and then give them prints.

Josephine's suggests that people were initially afraid of photography, that the "devil" the camera contained could capture some essential part of a person and store it inside. The account constructs a generational divide – those of the time before, like Punai, who were scared; those that came after, like Josephine, who were happy to have their photograph taken. But she also expresses a nostalgia for a time when people were proud of their photographs; when the few photographs people possessed would be displayed prominently in their houses. Prior to the advent of "photo-albums" in Roviana in the 1960's, photographs were roughly mounted in locally made wooden frames with or without glass. Very occasionally commercially produced frames from Australia or elsewhere were used. Josephine remembers framed photographs hung high on the wall of the main room of people's houses. The Methodist mission at Kokenqolo had its own rudimentary darkroom and often gave photographs to valued members of the congregation. Josephine suggests that if these were given to "people who did not know about photos" they would often be stored out of sight in woven baskets that contained *bakiha* and other locally produced shell valuables. As we will see in the subsequent chapter this is often still the case.

The numbers of Roviana people who practice photography remains small, at least by comparison to urban centres like Honiara, and certainly by comparison to the vast scale of Euro-American production and consumption. Prior to the 1950's there would have been hardly any local practitioners. Josephine had an interest in photography because her father, Lawrence MacMahon, was a European working for Burns Philp in Gizo and had a darkroom and his own plate camera in their house. She remembers that she used to watch the negatives and prints being developed. Josephine's exposure to photography is unusual for a Roviana person of that period and most people I spoke to argued that before the 1950's nobody had any desire to learn about photography - "it was a thing for the *tie*

vaka" - and no-one could remember any Roviana person other than Kitchener Wheatley who took photographs before WWII. Certainly few could have afforded the expense of camera, film and possibly postal processing via Australia. Josephine could not remember how long Norman operated his darkroom for, but it would certainly have disappeared, along with Norman's house and plantation at Lambete, as a result of the destruction of much of Munda during WWII. The great majority of any existing photographic record was also lost at this time as people's belongings were destroyed or lost during the time they were forced to hide in the bush from the occupying Japanese forces.

The only photograph that Josephine has that pre-dates the war is one of her husband-to-be Kitchener which he had taken when he was studying in Fiji (Plate 45). The majority of the surviving photographic record in Roviana begins in the late 1940's or early 50's, and the numbers of these are very small. She refers to it as his "passport photo". It arrived accompanied by a "love letter" and Josephine recalls that this sending of photographs as a token of love was a "fashion" that Kitchener had learnt in Fiji. "After the war it was very fashionable to have your photo taken. Kitchener was ahead because his father was Norman [ie. a European]."[60] Josephine and Kitchener were married just after the end of the war and Kitchener brought their first Kodak Box Brownie in the late 1940's. She remembers that they took lots of "swap photos" to send to people.

Talking of a photograph from the 1950's (Plate 46), Josephine remembers that the dress was a new one she had copied from passengers she had seen on the steamer that stopped in Roviana. Formally the photograph itself resembles prevalent styles of representing family that were the norm in Euro-American vernacular practices. The formal pose is typical of the two albums she has of photographs from the 1950's and 60's that show individual family members and groups standing together. Kitchener sent the films away to Freemans Studio in Sydney and they took six weeks to send back the prints. The negatives were also sent back and Kitchener had a special album for keeping them. She also shows me albums of colour photographs from the 1990's sent by her daughters now living in Australia. These show similar family groups but the framing of individuals is

[60] Josephine Wheatley, Dunde 6.4.01

Plate 45 Kitchener Wheatley. Taken in a Fijian photographic studio in 1940. Sent to Josephine in Gizo. Tinted black and white photograph.

Plate 46 Josephine Wheatley (right) and Florence Nose Tino (Faletau's sister). Taken by Kitchener Wheatley in 1951 in Yandina. Tinted black and white enlargement print made by Freemans Studio in Sydney.

often not full-length. Josephine is in her 70's and her disdain for the "rubbish" photographs, often torn from the pages of Australian magazines, that people now pin up in their houses, is typical of the first generation of Roviana people that practiced photography in any substantial way. The kind of formal posed 'family portraits' that Josephine grew up with are certainly no longer the types of photograph that many younger Roviana people take today. The kind of 'snapshot' photography that has been adopted by those under 30 with access to a camera is disparaged by Josephine;

> "People do not come out good in these photos. We used to be proud of our photos. But now people do not care."[61]

For her the period from 1950 to 1970 was the time when people 'came out good' in photographs and this notion is one that I will explore further subsequently.

That Voli only has one photograph of herself as a young child, taken in 1953 (Plate 47), is a more common experience of photography for the majority of Roviana people than Josephine's. This faded image shows Voli as a 3-year-old child. She cannot remember who took the photograph but it is one of her most treasured possessions. It was taken on her birthday and she does recall that she had just eaten some bread - a novelty at the time. The photograph and its' handwritten inscription, "J.Voli at Vivirua" (Plate 48), are an affirmation of Voli's existence. An insistent statement of identity in the face of change. The nostalgia that Voli feels when delicately handling this fragile piece of paper is sufficient to move her to tears. How can this small faded object have so much identity invested in it? How can it bear that weight?

Writing in 1853 Horace Greeley listed the uses that made "the daguerreotype a necessary contributor to the comforts of life";

[61] ibid.

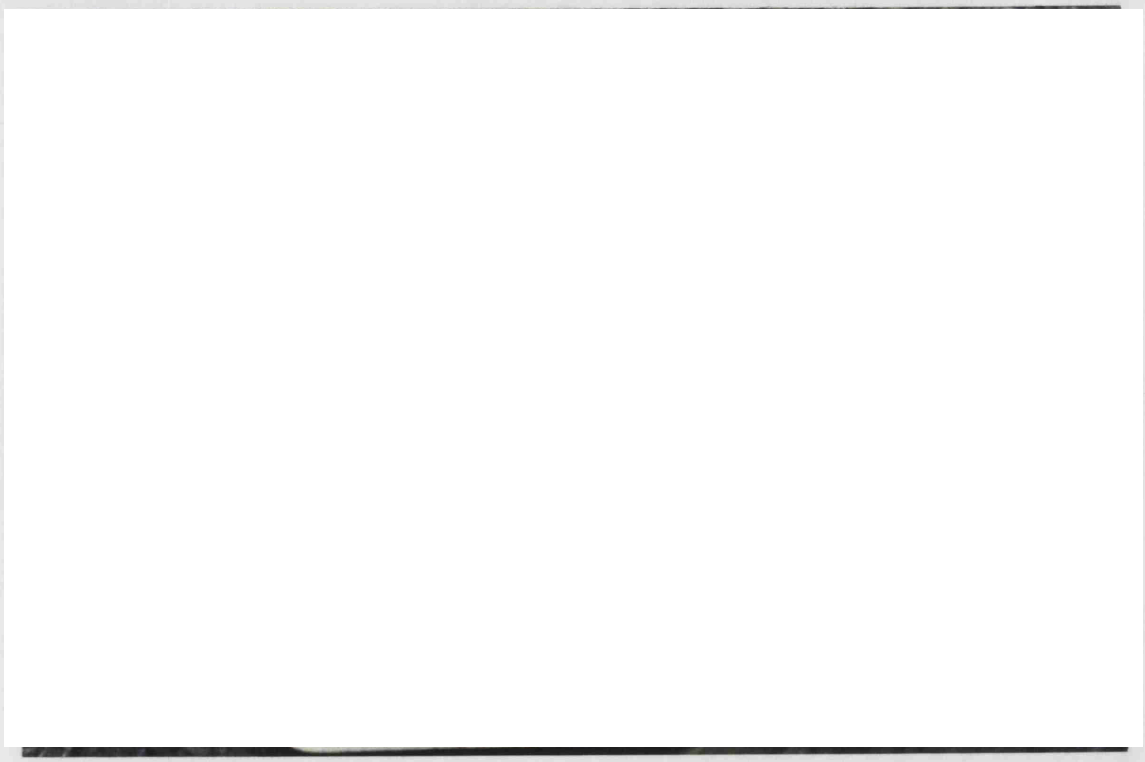

Plate 47 Voli Gasimata. 1953.

Plate 48 Reverse of Plate 47

"Does a child start on the journey of existence, and leave his 'father's halls'; forthwith the little image is produced to keep his memory green. Does the daughter accept the new duties of matron, or does the venerated parent descend into the grave, what means so ready to revive their recollection? Does the lover or the husband go to Australia or California, and not exchange with the beloved one the image of what afforded so much delight to gaze upon? The readiness with which a likeness may be obtained, the truthfulness of the image, and the smallness of cost, render it the current pledge of friendship;"[62]

'The Memory of Time"

In 1956 Faletau Leve brought himself a Kodak Box Brownie camera from a Chinese store in Gizo. The camera cost him AU$1.70 and a roll of 12 shots of film cost AU$3.00. The price of the film included the cost of being sent by the store-owner to be developed and printed in Australia. It took two months, and sometimes longer, before a series of contact prints were sent back. Faletau says he never received negatives. He tells me that at the time Roviana people did not know how to "frame" or "pose" photographs "so peoples faces appeared strange, they did not come out well".[63] This fragmentation of whole legible figures is a similar to Josephine's discussion of "taking a photo like Gasimata" - Roviana people had to learn how to frame photographs as much as learning how to use the camera.[64] Writing in the 1970's, Anthony Forge has observed that amongst the Abelam of Papua New Guinea;

"photography has been known to the Abelam since the first contacts with Europeans in 1937. Nowadays, when all young men go away for at least a two-year stint of labour on the coast, they bring back photographs of themselves in all their modern finery, usually taken by Chinese photographers. The subjects stand rigidly

[62] Quoted in Henisch 1994 p.165
[63] Faletau Leve, Dunde 3.4.01

> at attention facing the camera, either singly or in groups, against a background of either a white sheet or a wall. No Abelam have any difficulty today in 'seeing' such a photograph and in recognising and naming the individual concerned if they know him. But when shown photographs of themselves in action, or of any pose other than face or full figure looking directly at the camera, they ceased to be able to 'see' the photograph at all...even when the figure dominate (to my eyes) the photograph I sometimes had to draw a thick line around it before it could be identified, and in some cases I had the impression that they willed themselves to see it rather than actually saw it in the way we do."[65]

Older people had similar difficulties in Roviana. Although people could recognise faces, photographs showing bodies in action, or in profile, were referred to as failing to make people "come out good". Faletau wanted to "record every something", but he ended up giving lots of photographs to other people like his brother, or other family members. Or he simply gave them away to anyone who asked. He says he wanted to make an album but he ended up "sharing every something". He would take photographs for people too - weddings, feasts etc. Photography was quickly adopted as a feature of joint celebrations of all kinds.[66] Roviana people describing past events to me often commented that it was a "shame there was no photograph". Faletau was known as a *matazona*. This Roviana term refers to someone endowed with certain powers, including "good sight" and memory, but also implies a general sense of efficacy, of being able to make things "come out good". In the past *matazona* were carvers and boat-builders as well as oral historians. The role is inherited and contemporary *matazona* can trace where they acquired the power through four or five generations. For Faletau his ability as a *matazona* is what enables him to make photographs "come out good".

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[64] Holland1997 p.128 discusses the new skills of 'framing' that had to be learnt when large numbers of people in Europe and North America, who had previously used studios, began to take their own photographs at the end of the nineteenth century. See also Forge 1970

[65] Forge 1970 p. 287

[66] Bourdieu has talked of the camera's contribution to a "festive technology"? (Bourdieu 1990 p.20)

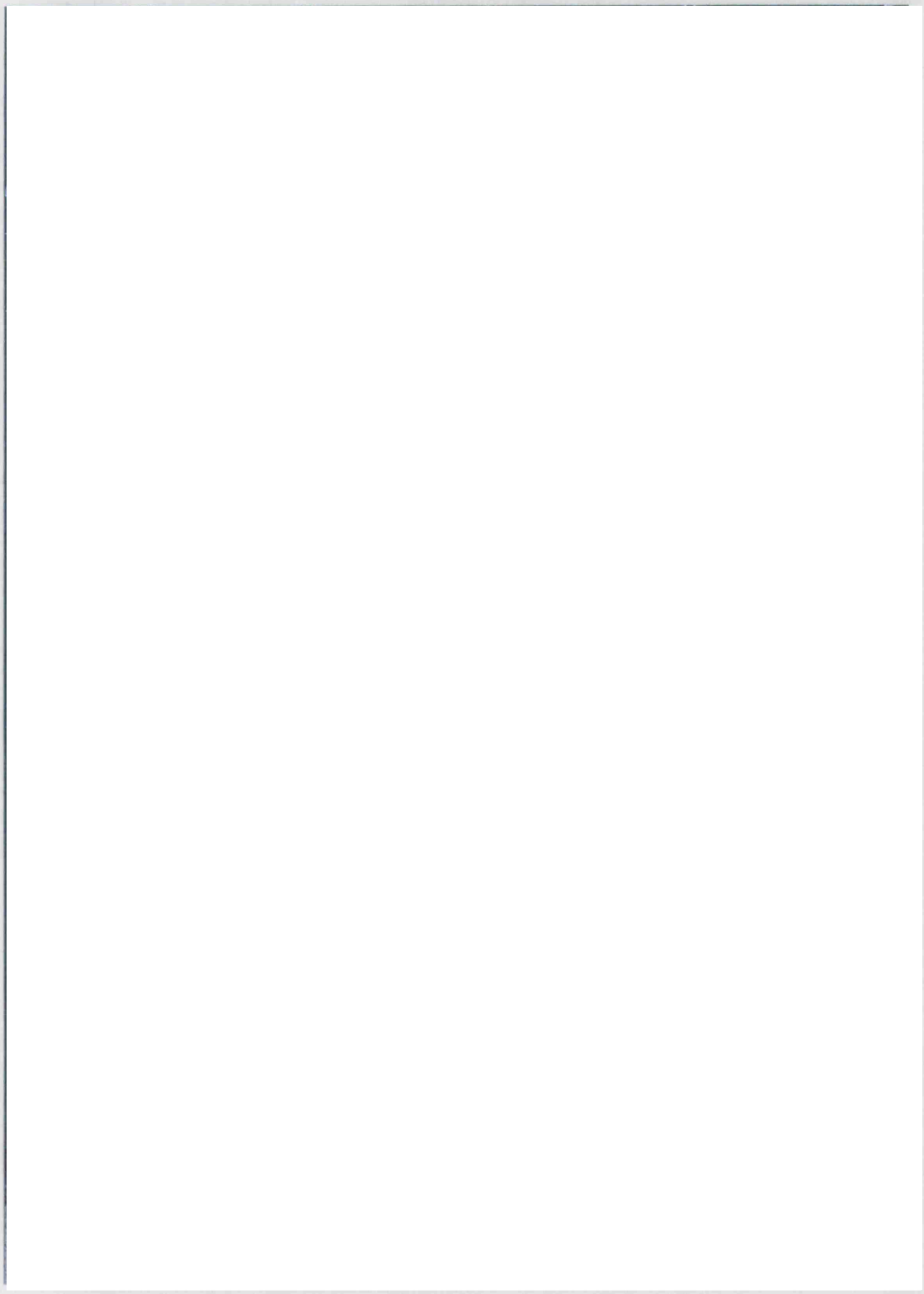

Plate 49 Faletau Leve holding a framed photograph of himself as a young man.

The photograph Faletau is holding (Plate 49) was taken in 1957 when he first worked for the British government as a carpenter and boat-builder in Gizo. A friend called Maepaza Gina from Fiji took the photograph on Faletau's own camera. Faletau wanted it to send to his girlfriend of the time. The idea of exchanging "love photos" came from American soldiers stationed in Munda that he befriended during the war. Americans gave Roviana people lots of objects - they sold the Americans carvings in return. But Faletau assures me that the objects were not the personal property of the soldiers, but were only given to them for the war.[67] People started drinking and smoking because of the war. Americans had "nude *pikisa*", pornographic photographs, and also photographs of dead Japanese soldiers. Faletau found both these types of photographs shocking. That one might possess a photograph of someone who had subsequently died was an acknowledged aspect of photography. But that anyone would photograph someone who was already dead presented Faletau with a series of problems that I will examine later. The Americans gave lots of photographs and other objects to Roviana people, which made them think that the British were mean. It seems that, in their distribution of goods, the Americans approached local ideals of generosity and sharing that the British had refused to participate in. The Americans had "photos you make in a box". The US army used a wooden assembly that housed a camera and could also process the negative and produce an instant print, much like the homemade 'street cameras' still used in vernacular photographic tradition around the world. Faletau remembers that they took lots of photographs of local people and gave them to them.

A photograph "made in a box" by US soldiers in Munda (Plate 50), was, according to Voli the photographs current owner, taken at the time "when everyone came back from the bush" (returned to Munda after hiding from the fighting). The grass skirts the women are wearing are from Tonga, not Roviana. Some local people acquired them from Tongan missionaries working for the Methodist mission at Kokeqolo, others copied the style and wove their own. The soldiers wanted photographs of "*susu*" (breasts). Voli remembers her mother talking about how they "dressed up" for the soldiers and then sold them the skirts. The nudity is shocking for Voli. At a time when Roviana people had been

[67] This made the process of exchange a perplexing one for Roviana people.

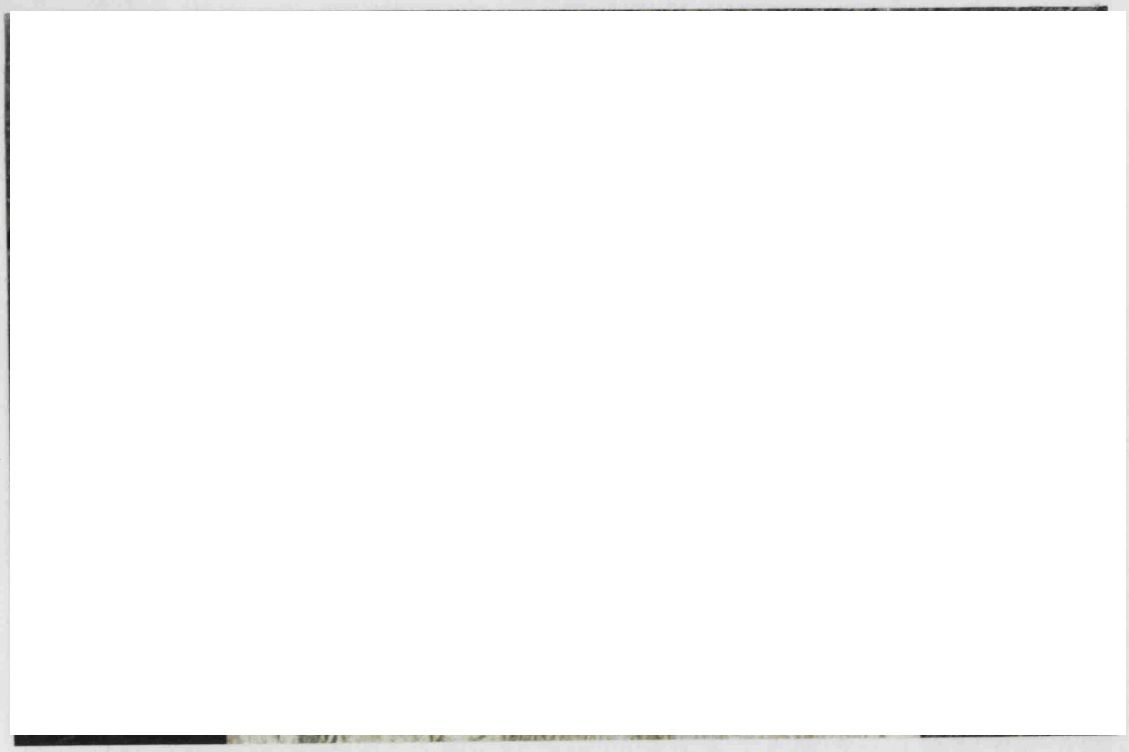

Plate 50 Salote (left), Florrie (Voli's mother – centre), and Edina (right). Taken by US soldiers ca.1944

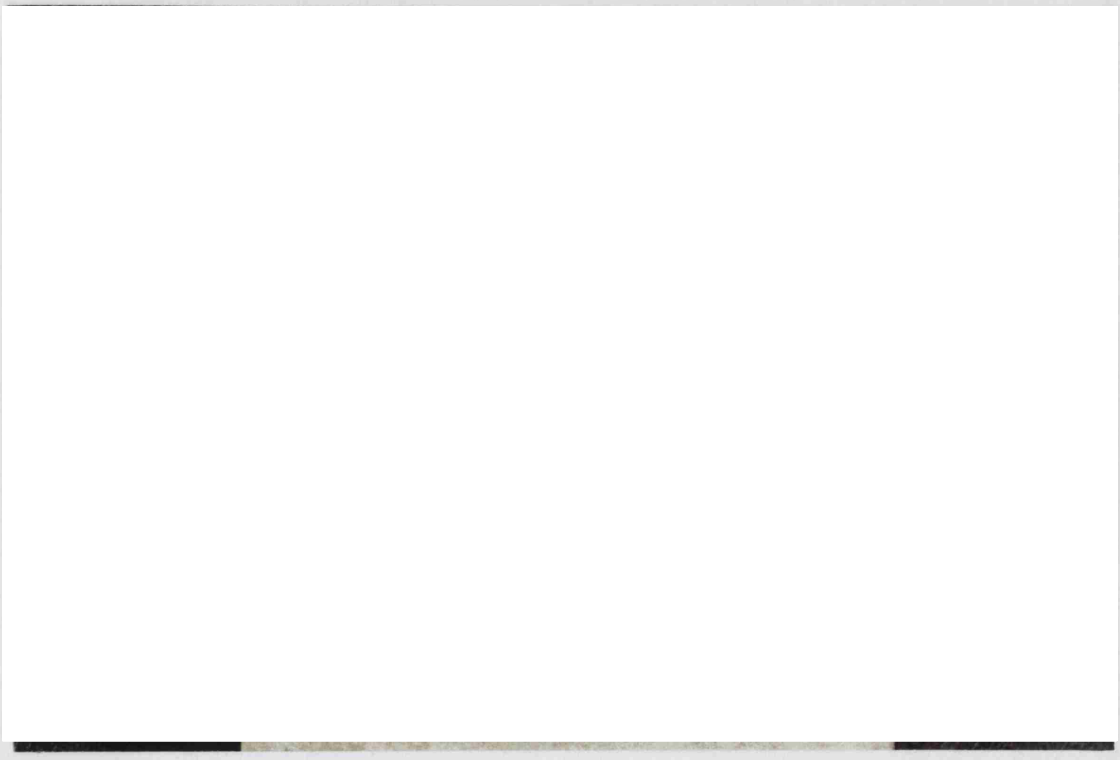

Plate 51 Reverse of Plate 50 showing inscription of names.

Christian for decades and wore dresses, going topless was not acceptable, and certainly not for women of this age group. The names inscribed on the reverse of the print (Plate 51) by Voli's mother, Florrie, reveal a proximal desire in placing the names in the order they would appear if you could see through the photograph.

Prior to the influence of US soldiers and the rise in popularity of "love photos", young Roviana couples would exchange elaborately carved immature coconuts. This was their way of "sending memory" and involved the use of fingernails to press a geometric pattern into the soft casing of the nut. The man would incise one line of pattern and then send the nut to the woman in secret for her to inscribe the next line. The nut was passed back and forth in this manner until "it was full up". It both was "a letter and a *pikisa*".

Faletau learnt the use of the camera from Solomon Dakei, a Roviana man who had been educated in Fiji. But his ability to make people "come out good" and to frame a photograph is a result of his *matazona* power. He describes the photograph of himself as a young man (Plate 49) as enabling "the memory of time".[68] It is the only photograph he has of himself prior to the late 1960's. He laments the fact that he has no earlier photographs in which he could see the passing of time.

> "This is a special photo. I can come out good. You can see the memory. It makes me feel sad that I have no photos when I was young. Only this one. You can see that I remain (*stap*)."[69]

Faletau uses the pijin word *stap* in the sense of 'endure', but also in reference to being *in* the photograph. Although it is used in the more mundane sense of someone staying indoors - '*hemi stap lo haos*', it is used here to indicate something that remains. Spirits are said to *stap* in certain places and features of the local landscape, and this photograph contains something of Faletau. It seems amazing that for someone who owned a camera and was a keen and active photographer, Faletau should have so little in the way of

[68] Faletau's description in English.
[69] Faletau Leve 17.11.00

surviving photographic material. For him this is partly the result of "sharing" photographs with others', but also the way in which photographs do not survive in the heat and humidity of the local climate. Photographs "*spoilem*" (are spoilt) very quickly - fading to white or succumbing to mildew - a process which means that those that do survive acquire an extra aura. Faletau's attachment to this particular photograph, which sits on a shelf in his bedroom and is one of four framed photographs in his possession, reveals that photography does provide a narrative of identity for Roviana people. It is important to *stap*.

Although WWII had an impact on the desire for consumer goods manufactured elsewhere, and it undoubtedly increased exposure to photographs, for the majority of Roviana people, those who were not part of traders' families, or *matazona* like Faletau, photography remained something that other people did throughout the 1950's and early 60's. Despite some knowledge and also first hand experience, acquired from missionaries, colonial officials, or expatriate traders - although usually as subjects in front of the camera - the numbers of Roviana people who actively practiced photography were small. Photographs arrived from elsewhere, either geographically or from outsiders based in and around the area. This changed in the late 1960's with the gradual arrival of cheap 'instamatic' Japanese cameras in the Chinese owned stores in Gizo, Honiara and other centres, and with the development of small photographic studios in these stores.

Studio Stael

During my visits to Honiara in 2000-2001 the Chinese-owned store An Tuk's was frequently shut because the owner had received threats that his business would be burnt to the ground if he did not pay to have it "protected". This type of extortion was a regular feature of the 'ethnic tension' and general lawlessness that was at the time a part of daily life in the capital. So I had to ask the owner's family for permission to see the photographic studio that I had been told formed part of the store (Plate 52). My request seemed a peculiar one to the owners they reluctantly agreed. Stepping into the boarded-

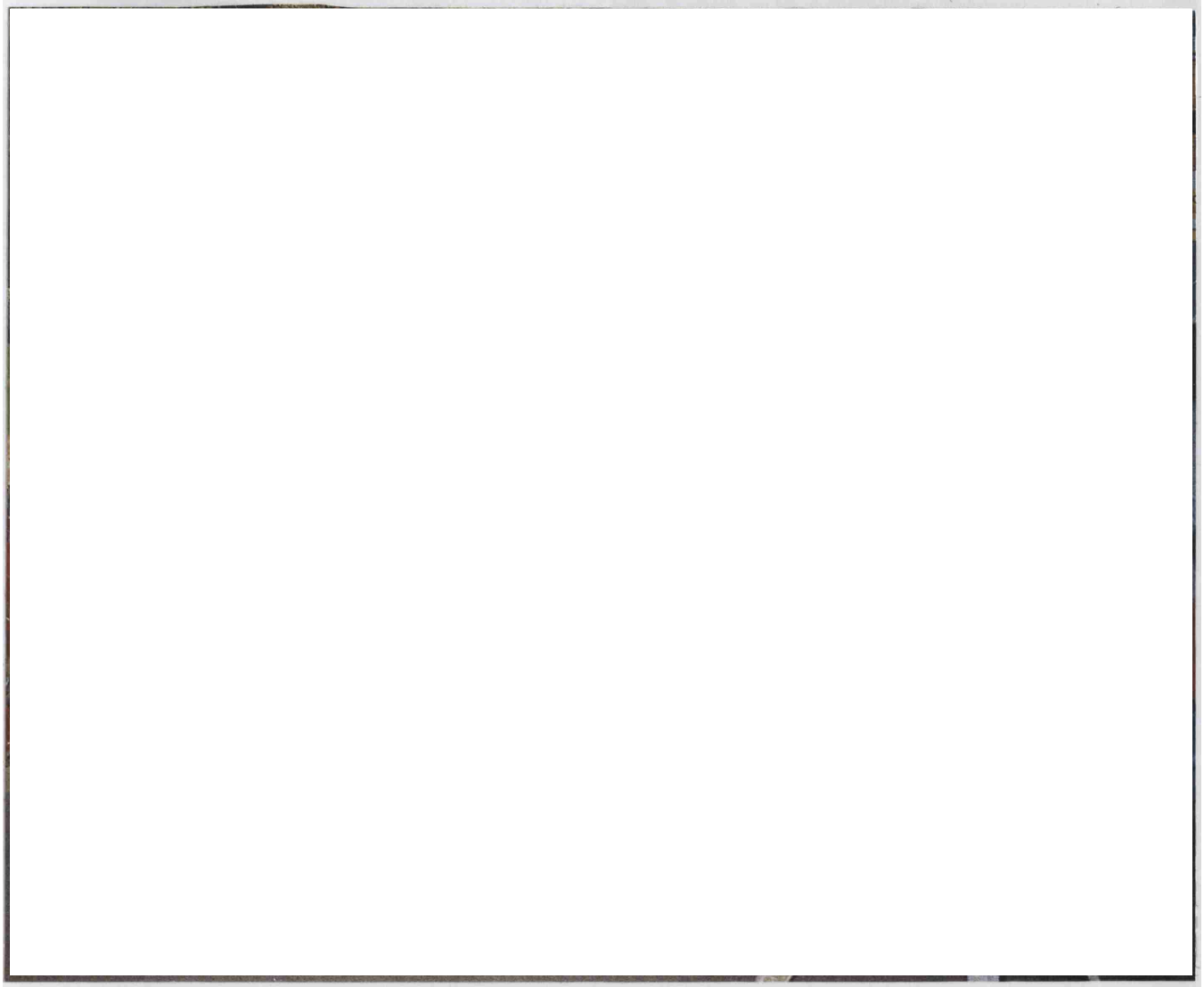

Plate 52 Studio backdrop in An Tuk's store, Honiara.

up store after the intense light and heat of the street, my eyes took time to adjust to the gloom - the musty odour of damp - my skin prickling with the sudden change in temperature. It was a strange space, empty yet retaining something - an accretion - of the presences that had passed through it.

An Tuk's has operated some kind of photographic service since the 1950's and, although there is now a 35mm processing and printing machine in a rival store in Honiara, it was for many years the main store in the Solomon Islands that catered to the photographic needs of local people. Sadly, An Tuk's has not preserved anything of this photographic record. Other Chinese-owned stores in Gizo and similar regional centres also sold cameras and accepted film for processing in Australia, but all the studio photographs I saw in Roviana were taken in An Tuk's. Various members of the Tuk family also took commissioned photographs for people and, when requested, occasionally travelled outside the capital to other islands in order to record events such as weddings. In the 1970's the chemist's shop in Honiara, which was run by an ex-pat Australian, also offered a processing service via Australia. Initially the service An Tuk's offered involved selling Kodak Box Brownie cameras and film and then sending the exposed film to Australia to be processed and printed. You had to write a detailed description of each photograph to send off with the film, but often films would get lost and prints would fail to be returned. Several weeks after the films were sent away a set of contact prints were returned to the store for collection by the customer. It is unclear whether the negatives were also returned with the prints, the An Tuk family were vague about the issue. However, no-one I spoke to in Honiara or Roviana could remember ever receiving any negatives with their prints, and apart from one or two people, nobody in Roviana possessed any. This is not necessarily the result of any lack of knowledge about photographic process - although this is an issue with many people, particularly those of the older generation - but has to do with local expectations.

Photography as a process is conceived as a way of producing an image - singular. It is not seen as a reproductive technology in the sense of allowing the creation of multiple copies. Many Roviana people who had owned Kodak Box Brownies themselves, and could be

expected to know something of film and processing, said that they never expected to get, or would have bothered to keep, negatives. This lack of concern for photography's reproductive potential - seen by many Euro-American commentators as central to its identity - reflects a similar focus on photographic prints in Euro-American traditions of what is frequently referred to as 'family photography'. There are a multitude of albums and frames for safely keeping prints (Plate 53), but far less emphasis is placed on the negative. People keep family albums but frequently do not have the corresponding negatives, the two become separated in the process of 'archiving'.

By the early 1970's An Tuk's had established a small studio on the premises that specialised in taking Polaroids. A corner of the store was equipped with a simple folding chair and a variety of plain coloured curtains were used as backdrops. The studio quickly became popular and was busy at the weekends with people queuing to get prints made to send to friends, particularly those of the opposite sex. Throughout the 1950's and 60's the practice of sending "love photos" steadily increased in popularity, and the introduction of the Polaroid camera made this practice far more accessible as prints were comparatively inexpensive compared to the cost of buying a camera and film, or commissioning a photograph. They were also instant and could be distributed to friends immediately. However, Polaroid prints cost SI $1.50 each throughout the 1970's which still put them beyond the reach of many when you consider that at the time a yard of *calico* (printed cotton) was SI 45c. The "studio stael" (studio style) portrait was popular throughout the 1970's and, regardless of their provenance, any photographs taken against plain backgrounds can be referred to by Roviana people as *studio stael.*

Plate 54 shows a Polaroid from the late 1970's is typical of the *studio stael.* There is no emphasis on particular poses or studio props of any kind. There is no requirement to face the camera straight-on or to be seated in a particular way. People are free to pose themselves how they want to, although there is a general preference for full-length portraits so that "the photograph will make you come out good', in the sense of a fully legible, whole body.

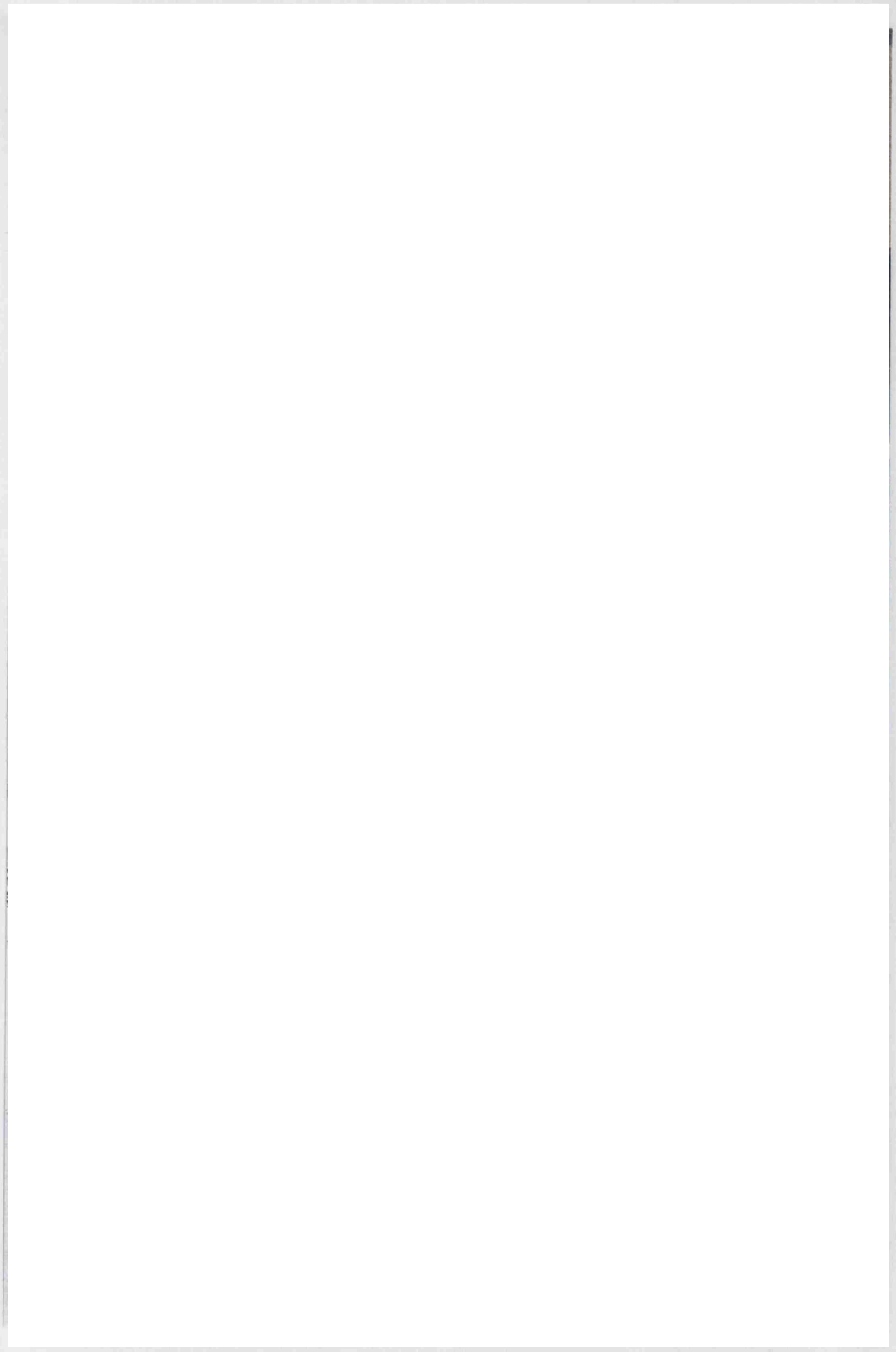

Plate 53 Frames and photo-albums in An Tuk's store, Honiara.

Plate 54 Colour Polaroid sent to Donald Maepio, Munda by Matthew Etu (seated). Taken in An Tuk's store, Honiara in the late 1970's.

Plate 55 Colour Polaroid of Voli Gasimata (left) with Jane (a friend). Taken in 1971 at An Tuk's store, Honiara.

Voli remembers that when the Polaroid shown in Plate 55, was taken she was several months pregnant and had just bought the dress she is wearing. She recalls that An Tuk's had different backgrounds, all plain colours, dark blue, red, and this brown. She had the Polaroid taken to send to Isaac Molia to whom she had just got engaged.

> "Lots of young people wanted their photographs taken in the studio to send to girlfriends and boyfriends. It was modern. We exchanged photos before we were married - it was the normal thing to do. An Tuk used to come out to the islands to take photographs of weddings, but we had a friend with a camera."[70]

Polaroids added greatly to the existing sense in which each photograph is considered a unique object in Roviana. They were also one of the key features, along with fashion and music, of appearing "modern". Roviana people of Voli's generation - she was born in the early 1950's - remember that from the 1960's onwards "people married for love" and often ignored parental wishes and any concerns for the extended kin group, *butubutu*. There is a strong connection made here between photography and a newly acquired sense of individualism.[71] Paradoxically, WWII ushered in a new period of "love" in Roviana.

Stephen Sprague has described the Yoruba practice of photographing older men in traditional dress so that they sit facing the camera with their hands on their knees with the camera positioned at waist-level so that the viewpoint is from the position of someone looking-up or paying homage. Sprague identifies what he calls the "traditional formal portrait" style of Yoruba photography in which;

> "*Ifarahon*, "visibility", implies clarity and definition of form and line, and a subsequent clarity of identity. This is emphasized in the photograph by the isolation of the subject against the neutral background, in the sculptural dimensions and

[70] Voli Gasimata 26.3.01
[71] See Macfarlane 1987

> symmetry of the figure, and in the inclusion of objects symbolizing the subject's position in Yoruba society."[72]

Although there is no comparable emphasis on a formal pose in *studio stael* and similar photographs taken by Roviana people, the practice of photographing whole bodies that are fully legible is concerned with the desire for a similar visibility and clarity. Individuals are thought to "stand out' better when seen against a plain neutral backdrop.

> "It makes you come out good. You want to have a good picture. You can see well. If you have rubbish (*rabis*) behind [a visually complex, or distracting background] you cannot come out good."[73]

Studio stael makes you "come out" from the flatness of the background. It "reveals" or discloses you, a process that Roviana people refer to as "*va vura ia*". A complex background, or a figure that is not full-length, interrupts the ability of the individual to be revealed or "come out good". Successful portraits are those that effectively isolate whole figures. There are formal conventions of seating in Roviana that position older senior men both physically and metaphorically "in front" of those that "come behind", but these have not been translated into any specific photographic practices. The correlation between visual clarity and identity has as its opposite the fears and anxieties that are associated with any lack of visibility. Together they form a sliding scale with blurred or indistinct photographs at one end and legible whole bodies at the other. Amongst older people in particular, there is a feeling that photographs that show parts of bodies are not quite right, they have not "come out good".

Liam Buckley has described the shift in Gambian studio photography from the ability and desirability of photographs to portray "*jikko* - the character, mood, or personality of a person" up to the time of Independence in 1965, to a contemporary focus on;

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[72] Sprague 1978 p.55
[73] Simon Sasae 27.4.01

> "the number of props (*juuntuwaay*) that clients (*kiliyaan*) use during sittings. These accessories belong to a category of imported goods closely associated with fashionable living, and older photographers hold them chiefly responsible for driving *jikko* out of the studios."[74]

The clients of Gambian studios use these props to "complete" themselves and a person's photographic clarity is "proportional to the number of things amassed and displayed within one's vicinity".[75] There is a similar concern with "fashion" and imported goods among Roviana people, as there is among many Solomon Islands peoples, but there is no display of props in *studio stael* photographs. This is not just a result of the fact that studios like An Tuk's are Chinese-owned rather than Roviana. The kinds of imported goods Buckley discusses – cassette players, radios, watches etc. – are all readily to hand in stores like An Tuk's, and also in people's homes and other locations where *studio stael* photographs are replicated.

Plate 56 shows Donald Maepio's wife Rosemary's sister, Savi Leve. It was taken by Donald on his Box Brownie when she was 14 years old and was staying in Donald's house in Honiara in 1979. Donald sent the film to Australia to be developed - he only got the prints back. An expatriate agent at the chemists in Honiara sent the films away for him. Rosemary remembers her sister was wearing her new dress she had copied from 'tourist styles'. The black and white Polaroid of Oso (a friend of Donald's from Baraulu, Roviana) (Plate 57) taken in the lobby of the Mendana Hotel, Honiara in 1972 shows how 'modern' spaces, wherever they were located, could be turned into opportunities for *studio stael* photographs.

[74] Buckley 2000 p.72
[75] ibid.

Plate 56 Savi Leve. Donald Maepio 1979.

Plate 57 black and white Polaroid of Oso 1972

But, unlike the Indian clients of photographic studios discussed by Christopher Pinney, there is no desire in Roviana photography to make yourself "come out better".[76] There is no sense in which people would consider impersonating a particular identity. Someone from Roviana would not assume the dress or style of someone from another part of the Solomon Islands.[77] My suggestion that this was the case in other photographic traditions provoked much laughter. People want to wear their best clothes, their new dresses, and to appear "fashionable". Older men wear white shirts and a *laplap*. People want to "come out good", but there is no desire to 'add' to yourself or to play with the space of the photograph. Roviana people do not assume that the body is a fluid site capable of conjuring up different interior identities.[78] Photography for Roviana people is about the correct, legible disclosure of a singular interiority. Where as Indian clients express and active dislike for "realistic" photographs,[79] this is the central aim of Roviana uses. Unlike the Gambian studio practices that Liam Buckley writes about where "the magic of the camera has nothing to do with the capacity to conjure up some imagined interior"[80], for Roviana people *studio stael*, like other forms of photography, is very much concerned with photography's ability to reveal an interior essence.

Studio stael is not indigenous in the sense that Indian, Haitian or Gambian photographic studio practices are.[81] This is a service offered to local people by Chinese traders that has only responded in a very minimal way to any local aesthetic concerns. There were no commercially run photographic studios operated by the British which might then have been taken over by local entrepreneurs - unlike the situation in Fiji were British run studios where gradually taken over by Indian photographers[82]. Although, Solomon Islanders do sometimes operate the cameras set up in Chinese stores for taking passport photographs, no Roviana person has ever run a photographic studio.

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[76] Pinney 1997 p.179 my emphasis
[77] Pinney 1997 and MacDougall 1992
[78] Pinney 1997 p.209
[79] ibid. p.180
[80] Buckley 2000 p.71
[81] See Pinney 1997; Houlberg 1992; Buckley 2000
[82] See Chandra 2000

Unlike other studio photographic traditions, there is no interest in manipulating the space of the photograph. Some Roviana people drew analogies between photographs and X-ray images, suggesting that both made the "inside come out".[83] Others commented that they had seen photographs of people "doubled", but that this was the work of malevolent spirits, rather than any desired outcome. There is no playing with the actual surface of the image in Roviana. What matters is the link between photography and the person, the possibility of 'coming out good' and the potential dangers of not doing so. The preference is for photographic clarity - for legible bodies. There is a certain 'flatness' that is also thought advantageous. People are photographed straight on, not in profile. The aim is not to "come out" in any three-dimensional sense, but in the sense of being present in the photographic object. Haitians use images of people superimposed on sealed bottles etc. to show that they are safe, or that they have captured someone. [84] This resonates with local concerns but is achieved in Roviana through retaining the photograph's surface as a site for the construction of a presence that "stares back", rather than through any processes of collage or montage. People expressed concern that people were not 'coming out good' when I showed them examples of collaged Indian studio photographs from Christopher Pinney's book on the subject.[85]

In the late 1980's the Solomon Islands government made it illegal to own a Polaroid camera without a government issued certificate because of a public scandal in the newspapers over their use in taking "lady *pikisa*" (pornography). Although photographic pornography is as old as the medium itself, there is a sense in which new visual technology such as Polaroid cameras and video, which dispense with the need for any processing by an external source, have enabled the production of home-made pornography on a large scale. 'Lady *pikisa*' were circulated in Roviana in the 1970's and 80's alongside pornographic magazines of Euro-American and Japanese origin, and in 2000-2001 groups of men would gather in people's houses to watch pornographic videos that they had brought from Japanese and Korean tuna fishermen working on factory ships

[83] Olive Talasassa 15/3/01
[84] Houlberg 1992

in the area and the tuna-canning plant at Noro. Even in small villages within Roviana lagoon that are nominally Christian Fellowship Church, which are generally recognised locally as being places of "order" where all alcohol is banned, someone would connect up a TV and VCR to a generator and watch a range of pornographic videos alongside "action" movies until the early hours of the morning. During the 'disorder' of the ethnic tensions in Honiara the only public cinema in Honiara, Super Cinema, was screening US pornographic videos to an eager audience of young men (Plate 58).

Rather than a thriving local film industry and popular visual culture, which is the source of many of the poses assumed by clients of Indian photographic studios,[86] Roviana people and other Solomon Islanders have imported videos. The photographic mural that currently forms the backdrop for the studio of An Tuk's (Plate 52) does not represent some fantasy of modernity. Despite showing a decidedly European-looking scene with its formal display of tulips the space created is not concerned with any localised 'experiment with modernity'[87], or with visualising any aspirations towards Euro-American lifestyles. Having a photograph taken, sending photographs to others, and having them to display, are all ways of being modern, but there is no sense that the photograph itself is a space within which to experiment. Unlike the studio practices of Indians, Haitians, or Gambians[88] discussed by other commentators, Roviana people do not make use of painted backdrops, studio props or accessories.

People use An Tuk's studio because it is the only one available other than one or two Chinese-owned stores in Honiara that use Polaroid cameras to take passport photographs against plain white backgrounds. There is no sense of any desirability for a particular backdrop, the only issue being whether the photograph is full-length or head-and-shoulder. The latter have a dual role as official images and but also function as personal 'portraits' in the context of people's albums and piecemeal collections. Other Roviana

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[85] Pinney 1997
[86] ibid.
[87] Appadurai 1997 p.6
[88] See Pinney 1997; Houlberg 1992; Buckley 2000

Plate 58 Entrance to Super Cinema, Honiara.

people who had used the studio in the past said they preferred the previous backdrop which showed a palm-fringed tropical beach (Plate 59).

Studio stael reached the height of its' popularity in the 1970's and 80's. It is not considered "modern" by the teenagers of today. With the increasing availability, and decreasing cost, of cameras, photography has come within the reach of many more affluent Hoiniara residents. To some degree this 'democratization' of photography has filtered down to Roviana. Young people there often have "snapshot" photographs that they have been given by visiting cousins or relatives who have gone to school in Honiara. They watch imported videos - the "lady film" 'Eyes Wide Shut' with Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman proved a particularly perplexing film for teenagers while I was in Roviana in 2000-01. They occasionally look at a copy of a well-thumbed Australian teenage magazine. One or two even have access to satellite TV. The flow of images is increasing.

Plate 59 Unknown people in photographic display in An Tuk's store, Honiara.

Albums

From its inception photography has had a profound impact on the development of new forms of biography and personal histories both within Euro-American traditions and elsewhere.[89] It has had an equally significant effect on ideas of personal memory, although there have been arguments for and against the degree to which this is actually the case.[90] It is now hard to imagine what histories of the self and the family existed before photography, so effective has been its assimilation into their narratives. What impact has photography had on Roviana narratives of the self and the family?

Outside of traders' families, like that of Josephine Wheatley, the use of photographic albums was not popular in Roviana until the mid-1960's and, although a lot of families aspire to owning an album, many still do not possess one. The small number of photographs families possess are often kept in a far more haphazard way. Particularly important photographs can be stored in small woven baskets inside larger baskets along with other valuables. They are kept in creased and torn envelopes, or housed in homemade wooden frames. There is a difference between the narratives that can be created by the juxtaposition and re-juxtaposition of photographs in these kind of ad hoc collections, and the desire to construct some kind of more fixed narrative in an album. When looking through albums with Roviana people, individual photographs were often removed from their plastic sleeves and passed back and forth. Sometimes they were placed back where they came from, sometimes not. This suggests a fluidity to the kinds of personal and family narratives these albums are intended to tell.

The majority of the albums that are kept by Roviana families range from the kind of small book of plastic wallets capable of taking only one print per page, to those with multiple pockets and fold-out pages, or large pages on which individual photographs can be positioned on a sticky background and then covered with a single sheet of acetate. The albums mostly date from the 1960's or 70's, although some people reported that these were 'new' albums that had been brought to replace earlier ones' which had rotted away.

[89] See for example Pinney 1997 for the impact of photography on Indian narratives of personal history.
[90] See P.Edwards 1998 and Keenan 1998 for opposing views.

As was the case with "love photos", the fashion for creating family albums was a product of exposure to the photographic practices of outsiders. In this case the British colonial officials working in the Solomons in the 1960's. Most owners of albums that date back to the 1960's worked for the British administration and said they had got the idea of a "family album" from their employees. Donald Maepio has three "family albums", two of which have plastic sleeves and in these many of the photographs have been given a small caption and a number (Plate 60).

Although Donald tells me he has long since lost the list that the numbers refer to, this is the most overt example of family 'archiving' that I came across in Roviana. Most albums reflected a far more haphazard mixture of photographs than Donald's roughly chronological sequence. Donald took the majority of the photographs in this album with his Kodak 110 Instamatic camera which he brought in the 1970's.[91] The labels show "name, place, and date" and he wrote them because "I want a record".

> "Lots of friends come to look at these photos. The children like to look at them to see how they have changed. An album is a good thing for keeping. I want to have an album that is full up. When I first got the album in the 1970's very few people had one. They were very jealous. I got the idea for the album from the British people I worked for. I wanted to make a history album so that people could see it when they come."

Roviana people who own family albums like this often include images cut from magazines and photographs acquired from relatives, friends, and tourists. The aim is to have a "full" album, something which is difficult for families with little or no access to photography. There is a desire to show others' your album, to ask someone to sit in your house and look at an album is a sign of being "modern", but there is also an associated anxiety. Asking visitors to the house to look at an album admits the possibility of them asking for individual photographs, something which would be hard for a generous host to

[91] Donald still keeps this camera carefully in its original plastic box despite not having used it for more than fifteen years. After it broke he reverted to using a Kodak Box Brownie that he had brought in the 1960's.

Plate 60 Photograph album belonging to Donald Maepio.

flatly decline. As a result of this process many families' albums are actually composed of photographs of other peoples families.[92]

The photograph of Frida Wheatley from another of Donald's albums reveals the circuitous route by which some photographs end up in family albums (Plates 61 and 62). Taken in 1964 by a friend of Frida's (Frida is Donald's wife Rosemary's "cousin sister") the photograph was sent to Frida's parents, Josephine and Kitchener Wheatley in Munda.

> "When Frida came to stay back in Roviana in her holidays her cousins would stay with her. That was when Frida gave the photo to Virginia [Rosemary's sister] and then Virginia gave the photo to me [Rosemary] because I had an album to keep it safe, and because Frida was away at school in Sydney. People send other people photos to look after. When someone dies we look back at all their old photos. Some we can give back."[93]

The photographs in Roviana albums reveal not only the contours of the family, but the wider network of relations with the extended kin-group - *butubutu*. The circulation of photographs amongst families and individuals works against the equation of family album with the nuclear family that has been discussed as a central feature of Euro-American vernacular traditions.[94] It resembles early photographic albums in Europe which were often composed of a whole range of brought Cartes-de-Visite of royalty and famous figures of the day, alongside photographs of members of a large extended family.[95] The process of viewing these kinds of albums reveals the efficacy of the familys' links with wider networks. Visitors and friends are invited to sit and look at the album and, as the pages are turned one-by-one and individual photographs are sometimes

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[92] Buckley reports that in the Gambia "it is common for people to write a "welcome" in the inside cover of a photograph album. The invitation to view a collection of snaps is usually administrative and legislative in tone, and written in upper case: "Attention! Attention! For your information, look at the card or picture to your satisfaction. But do not remove any card please. By Order. Thanks," "Please do not remove any picture from this album until you are told. By Order," and "Visit the pages but never pull out any card without permission. By Order." A signature always accompanies the instructions, lending the authority of ownership that belongs to the individuated and named resident." 2000 p.26.

[93] Rosemary Maepio

[94] See Holland 1997

[95] ibid p.117

Plate 61 Pages from family album of Donald Maepio. On right, Frida Wheatley outside a house in Sydney. Taken by a friend of Frida's. 1964

Plate 62 Reverse of photograph of Frida (Plate 61)

taken out to be passed back and forth, the connections slowly accumulate until they form a map of the family's position within the *butubutu*.[96]

Bourdieu has talked of European wedding photographs as "sociograms", figural representations of social relationships.[97] Donald is proud that he had one of the first "wedding albums" in Roviana – "even now it is rare" – and it reveals a range of links beyond the *butubutu* that are equally prominently displayed in albums.

The photograph at top left of Donald Maepio's wedding album (Plate 63), (Donald and Rosemary are the couple on the left) was taken by Bruce Palmer, an Australian expatriate working on Vella Lavella where the marriage took place on "Dec. 8th '73" as the handwritten note on the photograph records. The photograph of Rosemary (bottom right) was taken by another visiting Australian.

> "If you have photos you are very lucky. It is not a custom thing. An Australian lady took the photo of Rosemary and sent the print back to her. If the Australians had not taken photos I would not have any. I wanted new things. I wanted things to give to my wife. A photo is very special. It is something very different from our culture. We also exchanged handkerchiefs. Sending photos makes people happy so that their love can continue unbroken. Photos are even more important when you are not in the same place together. I also sent her plastic flowers from the Chinese shop. There used to be a song from Isabel in the 1950's about sending watches, dresses, and handkerchiefs to your girlfriend. It went 'every something from the ship *himi* for you'. But in the end the boy loses the girl. Sometimes there would be a suicide over love."

Photograph albums demonstrate connections with a wider world and the efficacy of the owner in mobilising those connections. They were also concerned with the modern world of "love" - "this was a new thing for us". Donald bought his first camera, a Kodak Box

[96] Buckley 2000 reports a similar process at work in the consumption of Gambian albums.
[97] Bourdieu 1990b p.23

Plate 63 Donald Maepio's wedding album.

Brownie, in 1963 from a British employer. Several people bought cameras from this man who worked developing photographs in a laboratory in Yandina (Russell Islands) that carried out research on coconuts. It cost AU$12 to have a film developed by mail in Australia. Lots of films never came back, they were stolen in Australia "to make postcards", or were stolen when they arrived back in the Solomons. When he could make prints in Yandina he gave photographs to "every friend, any time that someone came to the house they could say they wanted a photo and I would give it". But when he was in Honiara he made an album and did not give anything away. Lots of people asked him to take photographs. He made them buy their own film. "People wanted photos of their picnic". When he left Yandina, Donald only took photographs for very close friends.

The problem of having photograph albums, as was often reiterated to me by their owners, was that people could ask for images from them. One of the complaints often levelled against Roviana people who have lived abroad, or even for a protracted length of time in Honiara is that "they do not want to share any more". Roviana conceptions of generosity mean that an albums owner is always having to devise ways of retaining the photographs that they have so painstakingly collected.

Roviana people have appropriated the Euro-American format of the family album, but the form is often more important than the content. Any photograph will do, even an image of Tom Cruise torn from a magazine. The narratives these albums develop are fluid and not always coherent. Owners frequently had photographs in their albums of people they could no longer recognise - photographs they could no longer remember how they acquired or who they were of. Catherine Keenan has suggested that "we do not...simply remember with the aid of photographs; we remember in terms of them, even...in the absence of an actual camera".[98] The connection is one that is relevant for Roviana people. One of Voli's album is full of blank spaces where friends and relatives have requested photographs and she is concerned that she "no longer has these memories" (Plate 64). Taking photographs from an album deprives the owner of those memories as though there were no way to "keep them" without the image. She expresses a similar anxiety

[98] Keenan 1998 p.60

Plate 64 One of Voli's photograph albums.

about the gradual fading of photographs such as that shown top left. The decay of the photographic object is a matter of grave concern for Roviana people.Donald took a photograph of his father, Obed Bisili, in January 1982 six months before he died (Plates 65 and 66).

> "It would be hard to remember him without the photo. I took two photos. One on his own so he would come out good. One with family. I am very lucky to have a photo of him before he died [these are the only two photographs of his father that Donald has]. Now I can remember. When I look at the photo I can remember him. I can hear his voice. Before we could only remember people by thinking of who they looked like [among the living]. Now we have this."[99]

Clarinda

The photograph of snow taken by Clarinda that I started with has a counterpoint in another print included the album she sent home (Plate 67). She first went to New Zealand in 1995 on a scholarship to study medicine at Christchurch, but later switched to science. She was there for two years before returning to Munda for a year after encountering problems, but went back again in early 2000 to complete her diploma. She graduated in September 2000 then went to Auckland where she disappeared. Her mother, Voli, tells me that "we did not know where she was living - we tried to find her". She wrote a letter to say that she did not want to come back to Munda. "Her lifestyle is western now. She is in-between" is Voli's way of explaining her decision not to return. The photograph resonates with Epili Hau'ofa's notion of a sea that connects Pacific Islanders rather than separates them.[100] For Voli this photograph evokes an almost unbearable sense of loss. They are also objects which hold out a vital sense of connection. The memory work that the image is required to do seems familiar. A history shaped by longings and repressions as much as remembered 'facts'.

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[99] Donald Maepio 3.1.01
[100] Hau'ofa 1993

Plate 65 Obed Bisili. Photograph by Donald Maepio in Jaunary 1982.

Plate 66 Donald holding a photograph of his father.

Clarinda's photographs were taken to be exchanged, to be given or sent to someone else - they circulate and connect. This is a primary feature of photography in Roviana and elsewhere.[101] The scope of the exchanges, voluntary or not, is indicative of Roviana sociality. Clarinda's photographs resemble Euro-American vernacular traditions but, as we have seen with the photograph of snow, they also reveal a Roviana notion of animism. How are we to understand Voli's concern for the presence of spirits in the photograph? They are not posed in the way many Roviana photographs are, they are 'snapshots' - they signal a change in attitude towards photography amongst younger people. The ritual of being in front of the camera has changed. Has the self that is presented to the camera also changed? In relation to the consumption of imported goods by Solomon Islanders, Jourdan and Philibert have suggested that;

> "as the appropriation of foreign identities and products is, in some ways, a game, no serious attachment to those identities or products is required. When the game is over they can be put aside and forgotten...They are playing at having an identity they know is not theirs."[102]

This is not the case with photographs. For Roviana people the 'game' of identity played out through photography is one that can have serious consequences. To be photographed entails both the promise of "coming out good", but also the risk of not doing so. To remain un-photographed means you might not endure (*stap*). Photographs are not discarded and their gradual disintegration brings with it the fear of forgetting. Sitting with Voli as she carefully handles the photographs Clarinda has sent there is an obvious sense of physical connection. Keenan has suggested that photography is a permanent feature of memory, but is also antithetical to it, and follows Roland Barthes suggestion that;

[101] See Chandra 2000
[102] Jourdan and Philibert 1996 p.62

Plate 67 Clarinda on the beach. Unknown photographer

Photograph never, in essence, a memory...it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory".[103] For Geoffrey Batchen;

> "Barthes based his claim on the presumed capacity of the photograph to replace the immediate, physically embracing experience of involuntary memory (the sort of emotional responses often stirred by smells and sounds) with frozen illustrations set in the past; photography, Barthes implies, replaces the unpredictable thrill of memory with the dull certainties of history."[104]

Batchen goes on to suggest that the challenge for photography is to become something more physical that is closer to touch, smell, or sound. As Voli recounts a series of stories about Clarinda which have been invoked or conjured up by the photograph of her on the beach - stories which connect that beach with those in Roviana - the photograph assumes a physical dimension. Or rather its physical dimension - which was always present - becomes of central importance. The photograph retains something of Clarinda. Roviana attitudes towards photography suggest not so much a "memory-image"[105] but a memory-object.

Presence

During one of the visits I made to Honiara in 2001 I stayed with Ronald Talasassa, a friend from Roviana. Ronald is a magistrate and, with the recent troubles in the capital, he had been staying in a new house he had built on his parents land in Munda. While back in the capital to preside over an important court case, he kept two armed bodyguards with him day and night. At his request I took a photograph (Plate 68) of him early one morning. He wore a favourite shirt and decided that the tree in his garden would form a

[103] Keenan 1998 and Barthes 1984 p.91
[104] Batchen 2004 p.15
[104]Keenan 1998 p. 63

Plate 68 Ronald Talasassa

background from which he could successfully "stand out". When I showed him the print several weeks later, he had this to say about it;

> "I come out strong (*ninira*) in this. It is me - I come out good. The eyes are strong - you can see that I am strong inside. You can see that I can do things. I will make things come out good."

For me the photograph is a portrait of Ronald, it is an image I have on my wall at home. It is a coming together of likeness and identity. When I asked him if he was worried about the fact that the photograph does not show his whole body, he said that this was not ideal but, since the photograph was for me (I had taken other full length photographs for Ronald), he was not too concerned. The visibility and clarity of whole bodies is an important expectation of photographs in Roviana, as one elderly lady pointed out; "photographs (*maqomaqo*) are true because they show our body (*tinina*)."[106] In a discussion of Euro-American Daguerreotypes, Trachtenberg suggests that the way they recorded any motion or duration as a blur prompts the following question; "is the picture of a person with a blur in place of a head, or the head cropped away, any less a picture 'of' that person, no matter how little a likeness it projects?"[107] Although photography quickly became an armature for a modern notion of the self - "making the conventional idea of the continuous, coherent 'self' plausible...in its most primitive moments...it displayed dangerous tendencies to subvert that same idea."[108] Trachtenberg suggests that the blurring that occurred demonstrated "the original strangeness and difference of daguerreotypy. Such images defined exactly what had to be overcome."[109]

Similar concerns haunt Roviana attitudes towards photography. Any lack of visual clarity in the photograph is seen to be potentially damaging to the self; it must be avoided if one is to "come out good". If being photographed raises the possibility of this kind of dangerous exposure, why do Roviana people feel the need to represent themselves in this

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[106] Idadao, Buni 26/1/01
[107] Trachtenberg 1992 p.188
[108] ibid
[109] ibid

way? André Disdéri, inventor of the Cartes-de-Visites, suggested that the photographer "must do more than photograph, he must biographe",[110] and the photographer Marcus Aurelius Root commented in 1864 that;

> "a portrait...however splendidly coloured, and however skilfully finished its manifold accessories, is worse than worthless if the pictured face does not show the soul of the original - that individuality or selfhood, which differentiates him from all beings, past, present, or future".[111]

Lattas has argued that for the members of bush Kaliai cargo cults in New Britain, using the camera becomes a question of "photographing oneself into existence".[112] Is this what Ronald is doing? Certainly, photography is one way of manipulating the "fluidity of identity" referred to by Errington and Gewertz as symptomatic of Melanesian "postcolonial modernities".[113] Alfred Gell has argued that objects in Melanesia function in a scheme of "distributed personhood", and Strathern has suggested that the Melanesian self is defined relationally.[114] Tim Thomas et al have argued that in Roviana, headhunting practices and a range of shell valuables participated in a scheme of 'distributed personhood' in Gells' sense.[115] Marilyn Strathern has argued for the composite identity constructed by Hagen men from highland Papua New Guinea whose dance costumes function as "so many bits of other persons".[116] She suggests that;

> "when you look at a dancer in feathers and ornaments you may not know which particular persons have lent him this or that...but you do know that he can only stand thus by virtue of the relationships he has with these others, and that he has effectively activated. He is living evidence of this support."[117]

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[110] Quoted in McCauley 1985 p.41
[111] Root 1864 p.161
[112] Lattas 1998 p.224
[113] Errington and Gewertz 1996 p.114
[114] Gell 1995 and Strathern 1988
[115] T.Thomas et al 2001 p.569
[116] Strathern 1997 p.95
[117] ibid p.98

For Strathern, Melanesian 'composite' constructions of identity like this are at odds with the kind of unified individuals with unique characteristics produced in and through Euro-American photographic portraits. But, as Trachtenberg points out that although photographs could "'bring out' bourgeois individuality through 'expression' - the camera was also capable of producing images that were strange and estranging."[118] Euro-American uses of photography tend to centre the subject - although they can also reveal its unstable character - whereas Melanesian forms of representation often work against this centring. However, in Roviana there are, as we will see in the next chapter, representational forms that seem to work towards just such a centring of the subject.

Photographs in Roviana are intended to display the efficacy of the person. As Eric Hirsch has argued for the Fuyuge of Papua New Guinea; "photographs show persons in a manner that is intended to persuade others of the appropriateness of their appearance and of the capacities thereby displayed."[119] The photograph of Ronald achieves this, not through the visual display of dance costumes, but in the sense that it is an object that partakes in his presence, and in the way that it demonstrates his ability to "come out good". This visual efficacy is mirrored by an ability to act in the world. This is the work of mimesis. Hirsch continues; "for the Fuyuge power is the capacity to appear efficacious: to be efficacious is to possess the ability to effect conversions",[120] and photographs like this represent a kind of efficacious conversion for Roviana people. The photograph also demonstrates Ronald's links with a wider world - the biography of the object is important here. Although, Ronald owns a camera and takes photographs of his family and friends, being able to recount the story of this photograph would be beneficial - "when people see this [the photograph] they will know that I can make things come out good". Ronald's approach to the photograph is grounded in Roviana attitudes towards likeness and identity which have a longer history than that belonging to a "devil's engine".

Lattas reports that for the bush Kaliai photographs create a double of the world and;

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[118] Trachtenberg 1992 p.188
[119] Hirsch 2004 p.23

> "this representational double is referred to as tewel and in Mouk as ano, both of which also mean soul. In traditional Kaliai cosmology the picture of something was also its soul, the spiritual essence, or double of an object or person. Most magical spells in the Kaliai area work by operating on a "picture", on the soul (ano, tewel) of the object to be manipulated or captured. Cameras participate in this magical relationship between representations and the reality to which they refer."[121]

Lattas continues by arguing that; "European representational practices were displaced and reconstituted so that they became part of a magical cosmology that understands a representation to be the spiritual essence or soul of the object it portrays", and that "the mimetic representational practices of European culture...[are cast] under the spell of an indigenous system of magic that is able to draw a soul and a reality from a representation". [122] But, in Roviana reactions to photography, and subsequent uses of it, there was a recognition of the 'primitive' or 'savage' capacity of photographs to capture souls, rather than any displacement of European practices. There is an emphasis on certain capacities of photography that are disavowed in many colonial uses of it. For Roviana people, a presence is captured and reproduced through the European technology of the camera, but to what extent is this a 'traditional' understanding of a representation that captures and participates in the reality to which it refers? This is the question I will turn to next. As Lattas suggests;

> "what makes the mechanical eye of Europeans so powerful is that these technologies of surveillance are simultaneously technologies of memory and as such fit into a traditional culture of mourning and memory of the dead. What also makes the mechanical eye of Europeans so powerful is that the transformative creative power of machines is married to the field of viewing bodies, such that the field of vision offered by the camera becomes experienced as transformative."[123]

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[120] ibid p.33
[121] Lattas 1998 p.55
[122] ibid p.223 and p.224
[123] ibid p.224

3. Photo-Objects[1]

Resurrection I

> "Who is like what ? Resemblance is a conformity, but to what ? To an identity. Now this identity is imprecise, even imaginary. Can one continue to speak of 'likeness' without ever having seen the model ?"[2]

When I visited Joni Kia he was staying temporarily on Nusa Gele, a small uninhabited island at the eastern end of Vona Vona lagoon. With him were members of his extended family processing small amounts of copra while he made *buka* baskets to sell in Gizo. Arriving by canoe in the late afternoon I found him sitting on the beach playing with his grandchildren under the shade of a large tree. Joni is an old man in his seventies and, as we sat together and began sifting through the large pile of copy prints of nineteenth century photographs I had taken to show him, he talked excitedly, pointing out people, places, and artefacts that he remembered. He showed some of the photographs to the children gathered noisily around him and recounted stories about them; sometimes serious; sometimes with much laughter and shouting. Some of the photographs made him feel sad because he could not rememember who or what they were of. Some he dismissed as irrelevant. But one photograph brought him to an abrupt halt (Plate 69) . He gazed at it in silence before slowly raising it to his forehead, holding it there for several minutes as he cried. This was the first time since he was a young man that he had seen the face of his grandfather Wonge, who died sometime around 1910. He sat there repeatedly running his fingers over the image and murmuring his grandfather's name. For Joni this photograph effected a "living resurrection".[3]

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[1] This term is used by Edwards 1997 and also Batchen 2001 p.60
[2] Barthes 1982 p.100
[3] Barthes 1984 p.64

Plate 69 *Banara* Wonge. Rev. George Brown 1899 9701_600 Rautenstrauch Joest Museum

When he had recovered his composure, Joni spoke to the photograph quietly and then, still holding it in his hands, told me about his grandfather. Wonge was a prominent *banara* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a contemporary and relative of *banara* Inqava. Joni went on to tell me stories of Wonge's exploits and his genealogy. Although Joni remembered that when he was young he had seen one or two photographs of his grandfather, these were in the possession of missionaries and he was only allowed brief glimpses of them. He recounted several stories of Wonge's exploits and, when he had finished he showed me a small shrine (*hope*) belonging to his grandfather located amidst the coconut trees close to the beach. Typical of such shrines in Roviana it consisted of a roughly assembled mound of coral 'cobbles' with broken shell valuables, *bakiha* and *poata*, strewn on top. But also, sitting upright in the centre of the shrine, were several late nineteenth century thick-glassed "*gorogo*" ('grog' in pijin) bottles which had been given to Wonge by the European trader Norman Wheatley. Joni said he came to the shrine whenever he wanted to remember his grandfather. He could "talk to him" there. Joni described the experience of seeing his grandfather in the photograph;

> "He is here. When I look at it I see him. I can speak to him and he hears me. He can see me and give me blessing (*tinamanai*). I can hold him and remember him.[4]

"He is here" - the phrase seems simple enough but, like Allan Sekula's example of someone taking a photograph out of their pocket and saying "this is my dog" [5], it reveals a series of assumptions about the mimetic nature of photography and its ability to conjure up a presence. As an object that can be held, fingered, and caressed, but also passed around, exchanged, and given, the photograph is a material embodiment of memory. It can make the dead 'present'. But it's very tangibility is simultaneously a source of comfort and distress. Joni's encounter with the photograph of his grandfather was described by him in terms of receiving "*tinamanai*", 'blessing' - from the root word

[4] Joni Kia 9.3.01
[5] Sekula 1982 p.86

mana[6]. This blessing was manifested through the photograph, which enabled Joni to establish a direct physical connection with his grandfather. Many other Roviana people similarly asserted that photographs allowed them to contact the *maqomaqo*, variously 'shadow', 'reflection', 'spirit', or 'soul'[7] of dead relatives. Joni holding the photograph to his forhead was a way of "honouring" him, and the gesture was repeated by many Roviana people with other photographs. Joni's reaction to the photograph of his grandfather resembles a famous encounter of European photographic theory - that between Roland Barthes and a photograph of his mother.

Shortly after his mothers' death, Barthes was looking through photographs of her, searching for the truth of the face he had loved. After sorting through a pile of photographs, which took him back through her history but nonetheless remained for him "ordinary objects", merely analogical images "provoking her identity", he came across one photograph of her which achieved for him the "impossible science of the unique being"[8]. Although he decided to take this photograph as the starting point for his understanding of photography as a whole, Barthes could not reproduce it for his readers because;

> "it exists only for me. For you it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the "ordinary"; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your studium: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound."[9]

Is this likely to be the reaction of contemporary Euro-American audiences to this photograph of Wonge? The material culture is everyday, as Joni himself pointed out - a small basket, *poroporo*, of a type that is still in use in Roviana; a loincloth made of cloth aquired through trade with Europeans, *calico*, rather than a barkcloth "*kabilato*" or

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[6] The term *tinamanai*, "blessing", is also used in the context of Christian beliefs as well as referring to ancestors and spirits '*tomate*', see Waterhouse 1928 p.61
[7] The complexities of *maqomaqo* will be discussed later
[8] Barthes 1984 p.71

kolekole[10]; around his neck a *vusala*, a string and shell charm for protection from spirits, *tomate*; distended ears from wearing large wooden plugs, *vikulu*. The photograph does not reveal a great deal about relations with missionaries. It does not appear to be a particularly revealing example of a photographic genre such as anthropometric photography. The photograph was taken by the Methodist missionary George Brown when he visited Roviana in 1899 to talk to local *banara* about setting up a mission.[11] It could have been taken near where I had been sitting talking to Joni Kia, the landing point on Nusa Gele as, according to Joni, Wonge had a small coconut plantation on the island and was living there in the early 1900's.

If the photograph does little to fulfill any 'ethnographic' expectations in terms of material culture, it might then be consigned to the, often residual, category of 'portrait'.[12] The task involved with the photograph then becomes one of identification; once the individual has been named, and his or her importance to local politics or history assessed, it can have an appropriate caption attached. It has exhausted its usefulness. If this is the case then Barthes is right, for Euro-American, or simply non-local audiences, the photograph of Wonge does not exist. Only by reconnecting it with Joni Kia is it re-animated, moved beyond the anonymity of the archive. But, in his experience of photographic presence, is Joni the Roviana counterpart to Barthes? In what sense are their experiences comparable? Are Roviana expectations of photography the same as Euro-American ones? Does the photograph 'wound' in the same way in Roviana? The answers to these questions have significant implications for any notion of a photographic 'nature' - a photographic identity that transcends cultural boundaries. In his 1955 account of missionary life in Roviana, Luxton noted a particular local post-mortem practice;

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[9] ibid p.73

[10] Wonge is wearing a *kolekole*, a 'traditional' style of men's loincloth previously made of bark-cloth. *Kabilato* is a pijin term of Malaitan origin for loincloth which is now often used to refer to all types of 'traditional' men's clothing.

[11] See Chapter 1

[12] This is a dilemma faced by institutions housing collections of nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs of other peoples. For example photographs in Australian collections, although they may contain valuable ethnographic information about Koori and Murri peoples, are simultaneously photographs of peoples dead relatives, and as such are accompanied by a range of restrictions and taboos.

> "when a child died it was placed in an elevated position near its parents house and a length of bush vine connected the corpse to the house to prevent it being lonely."[13]

This seems to provide a willing analogy for photography. As Derrida points out;

> "when Barthes grants such importance to touch in the photographic experience, it is insofar as the very thing one is deprived of, as much as spectrality as in the gaze which looks at images...is indeed tactile sensitivity."[14]

But to what extent are expectations of photography either a product of cultural contexts, or inherent in the medium? These are problematic issues for how photography is understood in the context of cross-cultural encounters. How can the personal aspects, and impacts, of the photograph, be connected to broader culturally salient features, and vice versa ? Judith Binney and Gillian Chaplin have discussed their project of taking early photographs back to Maori communities;

> "few of them had ever seen any of the photographs before. Bringing the photographs was as if we were bringing the ancestors, the *tipuna*, to visit. Some of the oldest people talked directly to the photos...Our visits [similarly] became a reunion between the living and the dead."[15]

Binney and Chaplin also report that for many Maori people photographs can possess *mauri*, life force, and the ways in which photographs are animated also raises important questions.[16] In his discussion of the memorial capacity of photography, Barthes argues that;

> "earlier societies managed so that memory, the substitute for life, was eternal and that at least the thing which spoke Death should itself be immortal: this was the

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[13] Luxton 1955 p.94
[14] Derrida 2002 p.115
[15] Binney and Chaplin 1991 p.431-2
[16] ibid p.432

> Monument. But by making the (mortal) Photograph into the general and somehow natural witness of "what has been", modern society has renounced the Monument."[17]

Have photographs similarly replaced monuments in Roviana? The power of photographs as material objects cannot be denied, why else the need to hold, finger, and caress them? There is an undeniable need for a physical connection to the photograph in Roviana - it has a corporeal power - and its ability to 'wound' people like Joni requires explanation.

Photo-objects

The existence of photographs as objects - their materiality - has been largely written out of the history of photography. When it is acknowledged it is only in accounts of technical processes with no concern for the hold it exerts over bodies. Photography's history has largely conformed instead to an art history model in which accepted 'masters' are responsible for advancing the development of the medium, and vernacular photographies, such as the popular Victorian obsession with "spirit photography", are confined to the margins. A number of recent studies have now started to address this imbalance and there has been a move towards accepting the existence of a multitude of photographies.[18] Early Euro-American accounts of reactions to the medium often stressed precisely the materiality of photographs as objects and, although vernacular photographies in other cultural settings often celebrate the tactility and physical presence of the photograph,[19] this has not been a focus of twentieth century reflections on the medium until very recently.[20]

Particularly within the context of its encounter with other cultures photography has been effectively dematerialized - all the emphasis is placed on what the photograph is of, not

[17] Barthes 1984 p.93
[18] See Jeffrey 1999, Batchen 2001
[19] See Pinney 1997, Sprague 1978
[20] Edwards 2001, Batchen 2004a

what it is. In terms of the encounter between photography and other, non-Euro-American cultures, the emphasis in the popular accounts provided by travellers and explorers is on the 'shock' effected by photography's sudden introduction.[21] It is seen as signalling the arrival of the 'modern world', and as a medium which displaces earlier representational forms and strategies.[22] But as Pinney has demonstrated in his study of photography in India, it is often inflected by previously existing forms and is made to conform to the requirements of existing agendas, providing new opportunities to extend representational strategies rather then marking a rupture with previous forms.[23] In order to understand how photography functions in New Georgia - what expectations are brought to it, how it is used - I need in some sense to break it down into it's various constituent parts. As Geoffrey Batchen has argued, photographs have a "morphology" which needs to be recognised.[24] The illusionary nature of photography as a unitary whole needs to be recognised, and what is required in its place is an ethnography of photography. Photography is all too often dissolved into photographs.

Early daguerreotypes, each one the unique result of the action of light and chemicals on a metal plate, were popular from the 1840's onwards and were often treated as relics. Their lack of a negative, and their resulting unreproduceability enhanced their treatment within an animist trope. Encased in small, velvet or silk-lined boxes they demand to be touched, but also play on denying that touch - the daguerreotype image was fragile and had to protected from actual touch by a thin sheet of glass. To view a daguerreotype one has to hold it in the hand and turn it so that the light is reflected off its surface at a particular angle to make the image legible. They were 'experienced' in a tactile way as much as 'looked at'. In these early images there is a "comforting solidity" that is a key component of their memorial function.[25] However, Alan Trachtenberg has pointed out that turning a daguerreotype portrait to catch the light also revealed the image's capacity to negate

[21] See Chapter 2
[22] Slater 1995
[23] Pinney 1997
[24] Batchen 2001 p.59
[25] Batchen 2001 p.60

itself; "when the eyes go black and the eye cavity appears a blank socket, how startling it is to find in your hands the visage of a skull".[26]

It is the combination of touch and sight that makes some daguerreotypes, and indeed some photographs, so compelling. The act of handling a photograph is analogous to the process of photography itself in which the camera is touched by the world. The small size of daguerreotypes made them jewel-like, and they were usuallly surrounded by oval or round ornately patterned and textured gold-coloured metal frames. They are a development of the tradition of preserving actual bodily relics, like the lock of hair, and many early cases for daguerreotypes and ambrotypes also contained a space for hair (see Plate 70).[27] As Batchen has suggested; "a talismanic piece of the body thus adds a sort of sympathetic magic to the photograph, insurance against separation".[28] Some cases for daguerreotypes were designed to be worn as jewellery, reinforcing a sense of physical connection. From their inception photographs have had a physical connection to the person depicted. This is the 'primitive' practice whose traces haunt contemporary photographic practices, and perhaps "photo-objects" is a better term here, than photography.

In the 1970's Tibetan guerilla's fighting the occupying Chinese forces wore amulets containing a photograph of the Dalai Lama, whereas previously they would have carried an image of the Buddha to protect themselves against bullets and arrows. The photograph of the Dalai Lama is kept on the body as a sign of solidarity and has become a "photo-icon".[29] By wearing the photo-icon Tibetans partake in the Dalai Lama's personhood and risk arrest by having this icon on their bodies. There is a notion of proximal empowerment at work here - and there is a sense in which the photograph partakes of broader strategies of mimesis. Elkington and Hardy, in their 1907 account of Roviana, comment on Henry Guppy, a British surgeon who conducted an anthropometric survey in Roviana in 1854;

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[26] Trachtenberg 1992 p.176
[27] See Hallam and Hockey 2001
[28] Batchen 2004 p.76
[29] Harris 2001 p.187

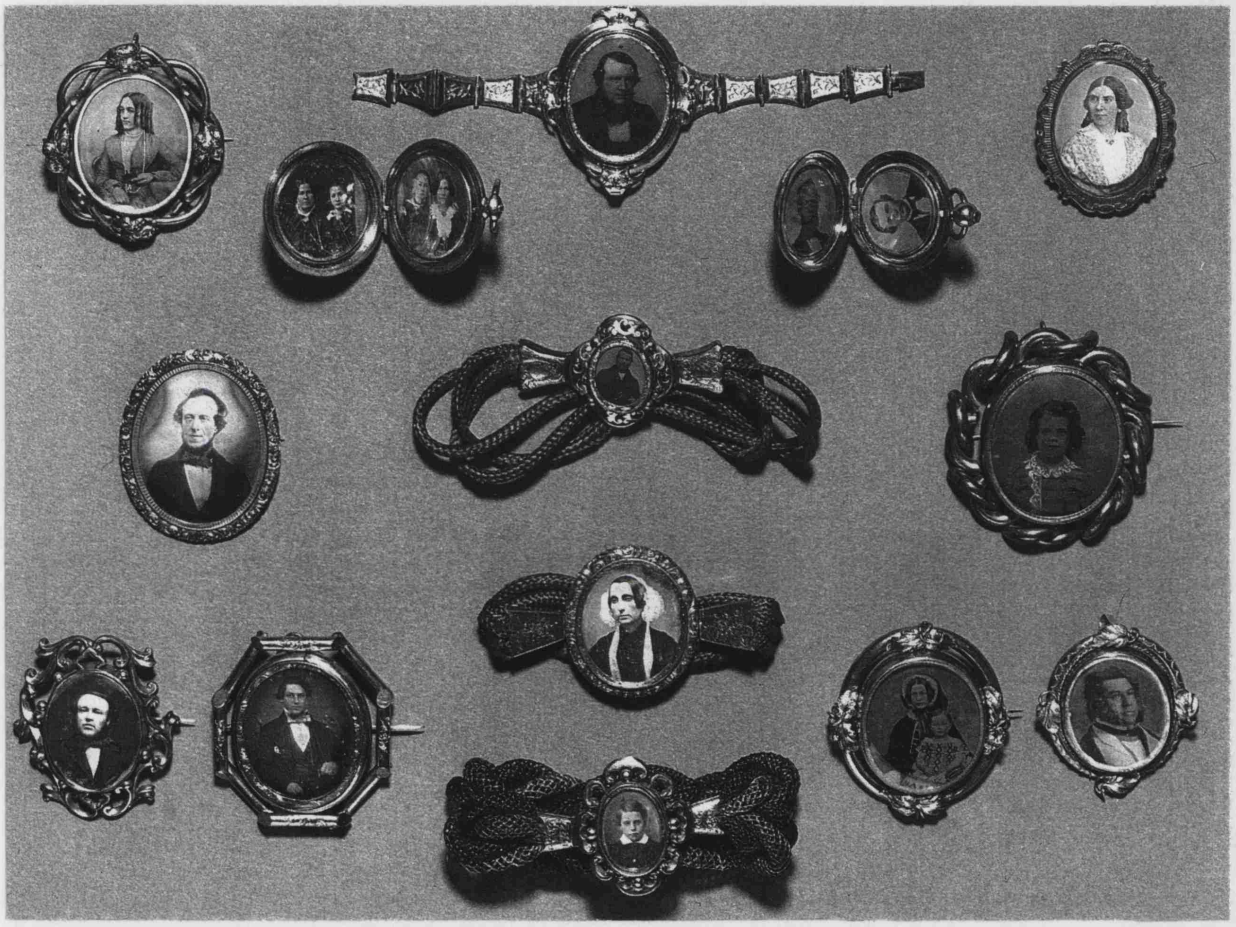

Plate 70 European daguerreotype photo-jewellery including bracelets of braided human hair ca. 1840-1850

"he says that when the natives cut off locks of their hair for him, which he desired for scientific purposes, they told him that if any sickness or calamity befell them they would put it down to him."[30]

These concerns remain pertinent in Roviana. The materiality of the photograph, the physical connections it allows, and it's ability to 'animate', are bound up with ideas of mimetic magic concerned with partible bodies. Walter Benjamin in his discussion of the disppearance of "aura" in the modern world of 1930's Germany comments that the "cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture".[31] Is Joni's response to the photograph of his grandfather a sign that he has the same expectations of photography as Euro-American audiences - is he responding to a similar 'cult value'? The act of touching photographs and the profound emotional responses they elicited were a frequent feature of looking at photographs with people in Roviana, particularly people over thirty. The practice of holding the photograph to the forehead was most pronounced among members of the Christian Fellowship Church. The church was founded in 1960 by the charismatic Roviana leader Silas Eto, a student of the founder of the Methodist mission, Goldie, and is widespread throughout Roviana.[32] It's syncretic blend of Methodism and Roviana beliefs retains many ideas about objects which are animated in one way or another, and this reinforces an attitude towards photography as a material relic.

Photography is one way of materialising the past, of somehow maintaining a physical connection to it. But in Roviana it is an externally introduced technique of recent origins in a cultural context with a long history of techniques for achieving similar connections. There is a relation between the photograph of Wonge and Wonge's shrine that needs to be understood, and I want to explore the relation of photography to a range of other Roviana techniques for making the past present. These practices inflect and resonate with the contemporary use of photography. In order to understand how photography might be

[30] Elkington 1907 p.138
[31] Benjamin 1992 p.219
[32] See Harwood 1971

an object of memory in Roviana we need to understand how memory is materialised through other objects such as shell valuables and religious shrines. What is the relationship between photographs and Roviana schemes of material culture and memorialization? Contemporary attitudes towards memorialization are influenced by the complex of beliefs associated with these objects. There are many difficulties involved in any attempt at reconstructing earlier practices - as Thomas says how can we represent "some imaginary time that is at once pre-colonial yet accessible to our vision ?"[33] - yet they need to be considered in order to understand what photography is in Roviana.

Faletau's wife, Daisy, has a photograph that vividly demonstrates the importance of photo-objects. The photograph (Plate 71), has broken into two pieces which are kept in a stained envelope which is itself stored inside a small woven basket with other valuable family possessions. The basket is kept out of sight on a shelf inside a bedroom. The photograph was taken in Pejuru village (in the Java area of Vella Lavella) by a Methodist missionary, R.C.Nicholson, sometime around 1920, although the print itself may well have been made sometime after that. Nicholson was resident in Vella Lavella from 1907-16 and from 1919-21, and the print was certainly made before the evacuation of missionaries that occurred during WWII. Although the photograph was possibly intended as missionary propoganda to show the 'savagery' of Vella Lavella warriors, the use made of the photograph by Daisy, and the family narratives within which it is suspended, subvert any such intentions. Faletau refers to the photograph as taken "*taem lotu himi stap*" - at the time the mission was being established - and points out that the man on the right is wearing "*calico*" (see above) as another way of giving a general sense of the photograph's age. Faletau considerd my attemps to work out the exact date irrelevant, and for once he did not recount a lengthy genealogy in connection to a photograph. This is because the photograph is from Daisy's "*saed*", side, and therefore the genealogy was her story to tell. He did think it important to name the individuals in the photograph. The man on left of the picture is David Rike, on the right is George ("*Geosi*") Tokuilo Sisu, an uncle of Daisy's from her father's side.

[33] Thomas 1995p.286. There is however, a real desire amongst sections of the contemporary Roviana population to reconstruct a coherent vision of their past.

Plate 71 David Rike and George Sisu. Rev. R.C.Nicholson ca.1920

When Faletau, with Daisy's permission, showed me the photograph it was with a palpable air of reverence. The envelope was removed from the basket and then the two halves of the photograph were taken out one by one and the photograph assembled on the table. Other photographs had been passed to me to look at, but Faletau made it obvious that this was not acceptable in the case of this object. This is the oldest photograph that Faletau and his family possess, it survived the rigours of WWII when many people hid in the bush to avoid the conflict. It is treated as a relic, an object with a tangible physical connection to the past. The large white patch on the right of the photograph is where the image has been worn away by Daisy repeatedly touching the print. Sisu was wearing a large shell-valuable, *bakiha rapoto*, suspended by a plaited string, *medaka*, similar to that worn by David Rike on the left, and Faletau suggested that Daisy touched this "to remember, to talk to him, to get a blessing". When I spoke to Daisy she said that the repeated stroking of the *bakiha* was "so that I can be with him" and reiterated the notion that the physical contact provided by the photograph was a way of being blessed. I asked her if she touched the face? "Sometimes I touch it. But it is respect [not touching the face is a sign of respect for her uncle]. The eyes are strong. The can catch you." Once the image of the *bakiha* had worn away, and the photograph had become separated into two pieces, she stopped touching it. But she still takes the photograph out and holds it whenever she wants to "talk". Photographs display the residues of their handling - material biographies - and this example reveals a Roviana photo-object. Both the photograph and the *bakiha* are efficacious objects, and the doubling that the photograph effects - binding image and object together - increases the opportunity for contact.

Although some aspects of the existing Roviana religious system were slowly abandoned alongside widespread conversion to Christianity, many of the concepts and practices, such as the veneration of ancestors and concerns with spirits, *tomate*, continued to have relevance and meaning for Roviana people and, amongst a significant section of the population, do so today. Some taboos concerning religious sites are remembered and acknowledged, even if the practices are not engaged in and the sites themselves not fully understood. Rather than signalling a decisive end to previously existing beliefs and practices, the arrival of the Methodist mission in Roviana in 1902 ushered in a period of

gradual change and modification of some Roviana beliefs.[34] Practices like headhunting were significantly curtailed, but others such as the building of *tomoko* (large trading and raiding canoes) were actively encouraged by the mission although applied to different ends. Importantly, there was a continuity of belief about material objects and their efficacy. Earlier practices also continued in tandem with Christian ones - Roviana people told me how people went to church but still worshipped their own spirits as well - and there remains an often ambivalent mixture of the two traditions.

A diverse range of religious sites existed when the Methodist mission arrived in Roviana lagoon and some of these have recently been studied and mapped by the New Georgia Archaeological Survey carried out by the University of Auckland and other institutions.[35] Many religious sites in Roviana are still recognised, and many are used on a personal basis by individuals, at least in the sense of being appealed to or acknowledged in hopes and wishes, rather than used in a physical sense. This is particularly the case with those shrines associated with garden or fishing magic. Some shrines, such as the one associated with *banara* Inqava at "Skull Island" (Kudu Hite) in Vona Vona lagoon, have become tourist attractions, but many, even if unmaintained and overgrown, remain vital to issues surrounding competing land claims and knowledge about them is both carefully guarded, and disputed.[36] A range of shell valuables are associated with these religious sites and form part of a Roviana morphology of power, as Peter Sheppard et al point out;

> "power or efficacy derived from ancestors is materialised, channelled and circulated through an interconnected set of cultural media...the archaeologically visible component of the Roviana chiefdom system, the shrines and shell valuables, form part of a set of power relationships in which head-hunting plays a fundamental role. We contend that head-hunting developed in concert with the other elements, which can serve as a proxy for this cultural practice."[37]

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[34] Sheppard et al 2000
[35] New Georgia Archaeological Survey 1996, 1997, 1998
[36] Schneider 1996. Some shrines may well have been moved soon after the arrival of the Methodist mission.
[37] Sheppard et al 2000 p.13

Along with other shell valuables, *bakiha*, minus their plaited string support (*medaka*), were placed in shrines, and the skulls of ancestors sat on *bakiha* in skull houses (*oru*). They were made from fossilised tridacna shell and required many hours of labour to be ground into shape. A "true" *bakiha*, a *bakiha rapoto*, had an orange stain and was a sign of chiefly authority (see Plate 72). Hocart recorded Simbo shell valuables as living, after their death - when their owner dies - they are broken "they made the rings 'no good' to be like rotting, their shadow (*galagala*) goes to Sonto".[38] Sonto, or Sondo, is in the Shortland Islands and is the residence of ancestral spirits. Amongst Roviana people that I spoke to, opinion was divided as to whether their ancestors broke *bakiha* after their owners death or not, and certainly whole ones are visible on shrines and in skull houses. But they agreed with the assertion that *bakiha* possessed a shadow (*maqomaqo*). Offerings made at shrines were burnt so that the smoke would take the "shadow" to Sondo, and breaking shell valuables performed a similar function. This physical transposition that effects the movement of the 'shadow' or 'soul' becomes a source of anxiety for Roviana people as their photographs gradually disappear as a result of the heat and humidity. Hocart also recorded that;

> "Currency rings ... are frequently presented to the spirits and also seem to be haunted by them. We have no positive evidence on the latter point, but we can infer it from the fact that arm rings are used in divination (*sambukai*)."[39]

Some *bakiha* were inalienable and represented particular histories, and Roviana people in possession of this kind of "heirloom" *bakiha* could recount long histories associated with them. They produced *bakiha* from their woven storage baskets, which often contained the families few photographs as well and, while holding the *bakiha*, related a series of genealogies and events in which the object was implicated. In this sense *bakiha* are important mnemonic objects for the telling of oral histories in the same way that

[38] Hocart 1922 Part 1 p.81 See also Dureau 2000 p.79 for Rivers also reporting that inanimate objects have souls.

[39] Hocart n.d. p.3

Plate 72 Banara wearing a *bakiha rapoto*. R.W.Williamson 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute 11364

photographs are. *Bakiha* were also used to mark social transactions such as the transfer of access to land, bride price, compensation payments, and establishing peace amongst hostile polities. They were also a means of financing large headhunting raids and paying for 'assassins' to carry out killings.[40] *Bakiha* were a new media of chiefly authority that was developed when previously inland populations moved to the coastal areas of New Georgia in the mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth century as Shankar Aswani points out;

> "consecrated *bakiha* emerged as divine signifiers and visible manifestations of chiefly authority. They embodied the actively manifest higher powers of the mateana ancestors...By authenticating the authority of chiefs, these sacred objects legitimised their control over the flow of ceremonial and commodity exchange networks."[41]

As well as authorising chiefly power, some *bakiha* are objects that act as mnemonic devices - they embody histories through the stories that are 'attached' to them and were kept as "heirlooms" (*merumeru*). Roviana people repeatedly told me that *bakiha* were like photographs - "they are the same as photographs (*pikisa*). When you see one you can remember the person [the owner or the ancestor associated with a particular *bakiha*]. You can see them." They assured me that both *bakiha* and photographs had *maqomaqo*, 'soul' or 'shadow'. The notion that photographs, like some other inanimate objects, have souls, *maqomaqo*, is one of key importance for Roviana understandings of photography.

Maqomaqo

Hocart recorded attitudes towards the soul on Simbo island in 1908;

> "The soul is called *galagala*, which also means a shadow, a reflection; it is caught in a camera. A Shortland man says "it stop all over a man": by taking a looking

[40] See also Sheppard et al 2000 p.12
[41] Aswani 2000 p.45

glass you can see it. When a man dies, his soul (*galagala*) comes out at the mouth: some men can see it by the use of charms...Rakoto says it is just like a man and big or small according as it belongs to an adult or a child. A certain shadowiness seems associated with departing spirits, for one man asked us whether a vague figure in an advertisement of Odol was a ghost."[42]

Hocart's account, although it is reminiscent of that genre of often apocryphal stories about 'natives' incredulous first encounters with photographic technology, actually reveals the way in which Simbo people could make sense of the camera and, in this case, the advertising image. They understood aspects of this new technology within their own terms. Although there were, and are, fears associated with photography in Roviana, these are part of indigenous discourses, such as beliefs about spirits (*tomate*), and not simply the product of a failure to comprehend photographic technology. They understood photographic magic.

The Roviana word most commonly used to describe the soul is *maqomaqo*, and this is also the word used for a photograph. A photograph is a *maqomaqo*, and the term is a ubiquitous feature of contemporary descriptions of photography and photographs. Variously glossed as shadow, shade, reflection, spirit - *Maqomaqo Hope* is used in Bible translations for Holy Spirit - or soul, *maqomaqo* is used to refer to the photograph as an object, and also figures prominently in descriptions of photography as a process. Andrew Lattas reports that similarly, amongst the Kaliai of New Britain, the word for soul, *ano*, is the same word for reflection.[43] Roviana people told me how their ancestors had put mirrors, acquired from trade with Europeans, on shrines. They also repeated stories of souls being caught in mirrors;

"After someone died you watched the mirror (*tiroana* - from *tiro*, 'read') [the mirror owned by the deceased] for three or four days. After this smoke would show up there. Then you could see their face clear and bright in the mirror like a baby.

[42] Hocart 1922 Part 1 p.81
[43] Lattas 1998 p.21

> The body rose up in the mirror and then went up after the smoke. The body was smaller in the mirror. After the spirit (*maqomaqo*) left the mirror they could take it back to the house."[44]

The practice described here is within living memory and was prevalent in Roviana in the first decades of the twentieth century. It reveals the adoption of European media into local schemes of transubstantiation. In 2001 Makoni described his encounter with his photograph of his father in the following way;

> "When I saw it he was alive. I kept that photograph (*maqomaqo*) and after he had died I looked at that photograph again and I thought that my father was still alive. When I look at that photograph I say 'that is my father'. Photography is the shadow (*maqomaqo*) on the paper (*pepa*). They caught the shadow and it became an image (*beku*[45]) in the picture (*pikisa*)."[46]

The photograph is an image that is "alive", but how is this embodiment achieved ? Makoni's account reveals the adoption of the pijin terms *pikisa* and *pepa* in descriptions of photographs, and these terms are sometimes used as qualifiers in distinguishing the photograph from other manifestations of *maqomaqo*.[47] However, *maqomaqo* is commonly used on its own to describe a photograph, only being qualified on some occasions when being used in conjunction with *maqomaqo* in the sense of 'spirit' or 'soul'. It is a ubiquitous feature of Roviana discussions of photographs, a term people use in talking about photographs to each other. It was also a key term in responses to my questions about the copy prints of early 20th century prints that I had taken with me. When I produced photographs to show people they would sometimes shout excitedly

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[44] Donald Maepio 25.2.01

[45] *Beku* is translated as 'idol' or 'image', although Waterhouse qualifies this as "one that is not necessarily worshipped" (Waterhouse 1928 p.6). It is also used to refer to a photograph.

[46] Makoni, Buni 26/3/01.

[47] Other terms used on occasions were *maqomaqo rimata* (sun), the shadow caused by the sun, and *maqomaqo zuke* (lamp) the shadow caused by a lamp or torch. *Zuke* was originally a type of New Georgian torch made of resin wrapped in palm leaves, but is now used to refer to all kinds of lamps (see also Waterhouse 1928 p.135).

"*maqomaqo, maqomaqo*". The language of contemporary Roviana discourse on photography frequently bears a striking resemblance to Hocart's early account;

> "The photograph (*pikisa*) is the shade (*maqomaqo*) of your body. When I look at the photograph (*maqomaqo pikisa*) of my father his spirit (*maqomaqo*)[48] comes to me, he looks at me. This is because I have a history with the photograph. When I talk to the *maqomaqo pikisa* the spirit sees me, and hears me too."[49]

The reciprocity of vision referred to here is an important feature of the use of photographs in Roviana that literally brings the photograph, the 'shadow picture', to life. To be in the presence of the photograph is to be seen by the spirit of the dead ancestor and to be able to communicate with that spirit. This communicative efficacy is a key element in attitudes towards a wide range of material relics of ancestors, including photographs, and is an important component of contemporary Roviana attitudes towards ancestors and spirits. Although knowledge of spirits and souls is sometimes fragmentary and contradictory, and also a combination of indigenous and Christian notions, it is necessary to an understanding of Roviana notions of photographic presence, and of how the camera might be seen to 'capture the soul'.

Souls, spirits, shadows, ghosts and photographs are all subsumed under the term *maqomaqo*. As Lucien Levy-Bruhl argued; "very often...the vital principle or 'life' of the individual is not to be distinguished from his shadow, similitude, or reflection...'soul', 'shadow'", while also pointing out that "these are words fraught with ambiguity, inexhaustible sources of error".[50] There are issues around what this soul might consist of, but Roviana people are unconcerned with precise definitions of *maqomaqo*, and focus instead on its efficacy. That commentators like Hocart reported local schemes in which inanimate objects have souls, suggests that, although 'soul', 'shadow' etc. may be Euro-

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[48] I have translated *maqomaqo* as 'shade' in the first instance, and 'spirit' in the second, to reflect Simon's initial emphasis on a more corporealised bodily connection, compared with the subsequent direct reference to an ancestor. This also reveals something of the nuanced and mutable nature of the usage of *maqomaqo* in discussions of photography.

[49] Simon Sasae, Munda 10/3/01.

[50] Levy-Bruhl 1928 p.

centric translations, objects and people possess *maqomaqo* in Roviana. It is a necessary, but partible, element of their existence. In one sense Roviana people did not have 'souls' before contact with Europeans and particularly the Methodist mission - they had *maqomaqo*. Yet Roviana people constantly reiterated the fact that *maqomaqo* was the same thing as soul. The equivalents of *maqomaqo* are also caught up with Euro-American understandings of photographic presence - of what photography is, and how it works - and such concerns date from photography's inception. In 1843 Elizabeth Barrett wrote about daguerreotypes;

> "the Mesmeric disembodiment of spirits strikes one as a degree less marvellous. And several of these wonderful portraits, like engravings - only exquisite and delicate beyond the work of graver - have I seen lately longing to have such a memorial of every Being dear to me in the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases - but the association, and the sense of nearness involved in the thing, the fact of the very shadow of the person lying there fixed for ever. It is the very sanctification of portraits I think."[51]

Although there are issues of reification, ideas of *maqomaqo* are directly relevant to current Roviana conceptions of photography. Photography is articulated with aspects of Roviana material culture and is connected to a morphology of other forms for materialising memory. Roviana materiality is intimately entangled with connections between the seen and the unseen worlds, and with maintaining links with the spirits of dead ancestors. For many Roviana people it is *maqomaqo* which animates photographs, as it does certain other relics and forms of material culture. It is *maqomaqo* that guarantees the efficacy and power of these obejcts.

[51] Qutoed in Henisch 1994 p.166

Embodiment

In 1908 Hocart recorded the Simbo post-mortem practice of "catching" or "transferring" the soul, and contemporary Roviana people attested to similar practices being performed by their own ancestors, although they were often unsure of specific details. After death the belongings of the deceased are broken; "they made the rings 'no good' to be like rotting, their shadow (*galagala*) goes to Sonto"[52], and the body is "hidden" by transporting it to an unfrequented spot on the coast. The soul, which has until now remained in the house of the deceased, is transferred by a ritual specialist to a leaf which has been inserted in the hole of a small shell ring ("*ovala*"). Both of these are then placed in the thatch of the roof and "are henceforth spoken of as 'the soul'".[53] A series of prayers and rituals are performed by mourners and relatives, and after a dozen days or so the skull is retrieved from the corpse and left to bleach. On the eighteenth day after death the leaf and "soul-ring" are reunited with the skull, which has further shell valuables attached to it, and both are then placed in the ancestral skull house in a ritual called "*vatome tomate* or 'putting in the dead'".[54] According to Hocart, if a man's head is not available it is represented by a tall angular upright stone, which is not worked in any way, but left as it was found, and is placed on a shrine or by a skull house. Alternatively, carved wooden or stone heads - the latter referred to as "*tomate patu*, 'stone ghosts'" - are used and Hocart recalls that; "one man was represented by a figure-head of that familiar prognathous type which in Eddystone [Simbo] is called *nunjununju*" (*nguzunguzu*). After thirty-six nights a ritual called "*londu*, which means 'to sink' or 'to set'", is performed for the soul's departure. Puddings are prepared, and the baskets used to carry them are burnt so that their "shadow (*galagala*)" can go to Sonto (or Sondo), the home of ancestral spirits. The spirits then come from Sonto to fetch the soul of the deceased.

This summarised version of Hocart's account importantly reveals several instances of embodiment; a mutability of persons and objects in which souls/spirits/ghosts can be

[52] Hocart 1922 Part 1 p.81. Contemporary Roviana accounts of earlier mortuary practices that I recorded varied as to whether or not shell valuables were broken after death. What is important to establish here is the association of certain artefacts with the soul or spirit of the deceased.
[53] ibid p.84 This following account is summarised from Hocart 1922 Part 1 pp.71-112.
[54] ibid. p.90. Note that the word *tomate* is used here, rather than *galagala*. *Tomate* is also used in reference to photography, and Waterhouse translates it as "a corpse; a ghost or spirit" Waterhouse 1928 p.114.

"seated" (*habotuana*), contained, or embodied in various material forms.[55] The soul passes to the material object through the mediations and performance of the ritual specialist. The ability of a tall upright stone to represent a man's head, as well as carved anthropomorphic heads, suggests a combination of aniconic and iconic approaches to representation. Contemporary Roviana stories about carved wooden or stone anthropomorphic figures, which were associated with shrines of various kinds, reveal them as objects which are similarly thought to be the "seat" of spirits. *Beku* is the Roviana term commonly used to refer to the anthropomorphic carved figures associated with shrines. The other Roviana word used in relation to these figures is *tigono*, or *tigono-na*, which Waterhouse records as "a fetish, an idol, or image. Supplication is made through this visible representative of an invisible *tomate* [spirit] for *mana. Vina tigonona* now used for statue, memorial etc."[56] The figures can represent both named ancestors and spirits, or "debildebil", 'devils', as Roviana people now frequently refer to them. One well known and frequently recounted story concerns the encounter between Goldie and a *beku* at the Kesoko shrine on Nusa Roviana island in the early 1900's and is recounted by James Pitu;

> "I know the story about the *beku* at Sidevele. It comes from what my ancestors told me. Sidevele is a chiefly village and that is where the shrine (*hope*) is. When the mission came to Roviana minister Goldie came here with his family to see this place at Kokorapa[57] Minister Goldie came here with his son. Yes, it was with his son. His son was young and still had to be carried by his mother. Before our people were converted none of them came to his place [the mission]. The missionaries came from Samoa, Tonga, Fiji. But they never came here and neither did minister Goldie. He only came here after the mission and when our people at Kokorapa had been converted. Then Goldie came to see the place here at Kokorapa. He also came to see this shrine. The shrine had lots of stories so they wanted to come and see it. He came to Sidevele where the shrine is. When he came our people welcomed him

[55] Hocart recounts a visit to a skull cave, an alternative to the skull house, in which a flat boulder near the entrance is referred to as "the ghosts' seat" (ibid.p.100). Importantly, *habotuana* is not used solely in relation to *tomate*, but in relation to seats of all kinds, reinforcing notions of presence.
[56] Waterhouse 1928 p.111

and he was taken to the places around the coast...He asked about the shrine and they went to Sidevele and when they came to this place they showed him the monument (*vina tigono*[58]). 'What do you do with this monument ?' minister Goldie asked. He asked this question of our people and of my father. My father said 'if we want power we go to him and ask for it'. 'Okay let me go and try that with my son' said Goldie. He walked up to the *beku* and he took his child with him. It was like a sacrifice (*vukivukihi*[59]). Goldie said to the *beku* 'this is my child, try and take him'. But nothing happened so Goldie said the *beku* could not take him. Our people said 'that is okay, that is not a human being it is only a *beku*'. It was only carved for those people before (*tie pukerane*[60]) to worship. Goldie left Sidevele, they got in their canoe and left. When they were in Munda, Goldie's son died. This was at their house in Kokeqolo. Goldie did not come back to Nusa Roviana but he called for my father. He told my father 'it is true, the things that were made and carved did have power'...I think he must have also said that the Lord Jehovah must have given power to these things so that the people before could use them."[61]

Beku are objects which embody ancestral spirits and channel their power - *beku* possess an agency; they do things. Ideas about the efficacy and power of objects like *beku* are a regular feature of contemporary accounts of earlier practices, in particular those stories recounted by the older generation.[62] These ideas are an integral component of such stories and are used in constructing or ascribing some kind of coherence to earlier practices. This particular example also highlights the ambivalences involved in this process; on the one hand ideas about the power of *beku* are "heathen" beliefs from "before" (ie. before the adoption of Christian practices), and on the other they are entangled with claims of ancestral continuity and are therefore also potential sources of pride.[63] The popularity of

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[57] Kokorapa is one of the three main settled areas on Nusa Roviana island

[58] *Vina* is a prefix which transforms an adjective into a noun, and *tigono* is used to refer to a statue, idol, monument, or memorial. *Vina tigono* is used to refer to a statue of a named ancestor.

[59] Waterhouse translates *vukivukihi* as "to make an offering to a *tomate*" (spirit) Waterhouse 1928 p.132.

[60] *Tie* ('human being') *pukerane* ('before' or 'formerly') is used to refer to people living before the arrival of the Methodist mission or, more generally, to people who practiced *kastom*.

[61] James Pitu, Nusa Roviana 12/4/01. The site of the *hope* is still visible in Sidevele but, according to Pitu, the *beku* itself was destroyed by bombs during World War II.

[62] In this case the storyteller, James Pitu, is in his 70's.

[63] See Dureau 1998.

the previous story, which was I was told in slightly different forms on many occasions, is due in part to its suggestion of resistance to Christianisation and its assertion of the power of *beku*, albeit within an account which in some sense finally reaffirms Christian beliefs. It is also a story which is told to outsiders like myself with particular relish as, like stories about headhunting, it demonstrates how "strong" Roviana people were. Despite being Christian, older people repeatedly stated that shrines and artefacts associated with them retained their power today, although on occasions, like that above, they explained that their ancestors had mistaken the work of "Jehovah" for that of their own spirits. Although shrines are not necessarily actively maintained, they are still treated with respect, particularly by the older generation, and have occasionally been desecrated by contemporary Christian groups, an action which demonstrates their continuing importance as symbols of the 'time before'.[64] James discussed the photograph he identified as the Kesoko shrine (Plate 73);

> "The photograph that we see is a true one. We must look after these photographs like we look after shrines. They can show us our ancestors and we can get blessing (*tinamanai*) from them. We get blessing through our custom. Photographs can keep our custom. We must not lose our skulls, our *bakiha*, our shrines."[65]

The founding of the indigenous Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) in Roviana involves another story of embodiment and of power 'seated' or inherent in material objects. The story is well known to members of the church throughout Roviana and concerns events that occurred when Goldie returned there to celebrate the Methodist mission's diamond jubilee in 1952. The way in which Goldie passed on his *mana* (power) to Silas Eto founder of the CFC, is recounted by Davita Agobe;

> "Take this box in your hands Silas. It is the box of the Holy Spirit. I give it to you now. When I am gone open it and begin your work in the Holy Spirit...Goldie

[64] Olobuki shrine on Nusa Roviana, the most important shrine on the island containing the skulls of many important ancestors, was vandalised by a Christian group in 1993 and many of the skulls were thrown away or broken (Sheppard et al 2000 p.22)
[65] James Pitu, Nusa Roviana 12/4/01

Plate 73 “A chief’s grave with a tall thin black idol, western Rubiaan lagoon”
R.W.Williamson 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute 11359

placed the black shining box in Eto's hands...This is how Silas received the black box, which is not a real box but rather a sign of the Holy Spirit, the black box is now the body of the Holy Mama."[66]

As well as concerning notions of embodiment, both these stories also importantly serve to maintain a connection of some kind between Christian and indigenous beliefs through a discourse of materialised spirit. Such stories suggest a continuity of indigenous ideas of embodiment and, as Sheppard et al have argued; "the notion that engagement with the West resulted in the demise of an indigenous political and religious expression, seriously distorts a complex and creative resortment of Roviana ritual, ideational and politico-economic practices."[67] In the story about the shrine at Sidevele representation is subsumed by presence. What is at stake here is the way in which certain objects become the living embodiment of what they represent, and in so doing manifest a power to affect people and events. Older people often recognised particular *beku* in photographs that I showed them, and their stories about them stressed the efficacy and power of these objects, while simultaneously providing occasions for recounting the process of Christianisation. In this sense photographs of *beku* are themselves objects that, performed in this way, can articulate those changes through the subtle interplay of difference and continuity. So, when Makoni recognised a particular *beku* (Plate 74) in one of the copy prints I showed him, it was with a mixture of pride, but also with a concern to acknowledge or establish a distance from earlier beliefs;

"He is the seat (*hambotuana*) of the chief. It's called Ade in Munda. The people before put up that *beku*. He is a monument (*tigono*) for the chiefly tribe in Munda. That is where they get (*vina ria*[68]) their power (*mana*) before they could go and fight or make a feast. They would come and pray to this *beku*. They would see him and he answered them. No-one could go near him or spoil it. If anyone did that they would be possessed (*tagoa*). They would be cursed in their daily living. That is the

[66] Davita Agobe in Harwood 1971 p.80. *Mama* is an endearing term for 'father'.
[67] Sheppard et al 2000 p.11

[68] Waterhouse translates this as "to call upon to accompany" (Waterhouse 1928 p.93)

Plate 74 “a chief’s grave with a very old and worn lichen-covered figure made out of the trunk of a tree, with the face indistinguishable and with two arms hanging on the body, western Rubiana lagoon” R.W.Williamson 26 April 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute 11367

god (*tamasa*[69]) of the old people. The god of heaven replaced the god of our ancestors. Their first god was this [gesturing at the photograph]...Today we see a different god. We get our power from the Christian god now and from our ancestors. When the mission came they stopped worshipping at Sisiata and they came to Goldie and left everything. But their worship (*vahesia*) stayed on until, after some time, they left the *beku* and it rotted and people went and spoiled it. When the mission came it had no meaning because people went to the Christian god. When I was small I saw that *beku*. The old men told me 'that's the *beku*, don't spoil it'. I saw the *beku* and he was like a human being (*guana tie*[70]). We paid respect every time we saw him because we were afraid of the *beku* until the mission came. Resana is the name of that *beku*. The *beku* is an image (*pikisa*) like the photograph."[71]

What emerges from all these accounts is the way in which, through embodiment, artefacts like *beku* provide a connection between the beholder and the ancestor; they are manifestations which facilitate access to ancestral power. Makoni recalls how *beku* were monuments (*tigono*), representations of specific named ancestors who appeared 'like human beings'. As images *beku* possess an agency and a power. They demand something from the viewer and, as David Freedberg has argued in relation to a medieval French statue, the Madonna of Rocamadour, "what is at issue is the response that is predicated on the assumption of presence, not on the fact of representation...what is represented becomes fully present".[72] *Beku*, like shrines and a range of artefacts including photographs, are sites for effective communication with the ancestors, they make them present. For Roviana people authority in the world of the living was, and to some extent continues to be, demonstrated "in an ability to commune effectively with power-giving ancestors...[and this] was also effected in a spatial compression, and perhaps even a blurring between the worlds of the ancestors and the living".[73] Photographs are intimately

[69] The use of *tamasa* in relation to *tomate* is complex and will be explored later in this chapter.
[70] *Guana* also has the sense of 'resembling'
[71] Makoni, Buni village, Vona Vona Lagoon12/3/01. See Nagaoka 2000 p.7 for a possible alternative to Makoni's identification of this photograph as the *beku* at Ade.
[72] Freedberg 1989 p.28
[73] T.Thomas et al 2001 p.563

entangled in this process. They are entwined with various notions of *maqomaqo*, and this discourse is bound up with the process of maintaining connections with ancestors and spirits. The materiality of the photograph is ascribed a place in the scheme of indigenous material culture and notions of photographic presence are part of ongoing Roviana discourses about ancestral spirits.

Mimesis

> "The photograph is a shadow (*maqomaqo*). It is the true (*hinokara*) shadow of your body. It shows hidden (*tome*[74]) things, but it is true. It can imitate (*tavete luli*). The photograph becomes like me. The photograph is clever, it can copy (*kumberia*). It can make something close (*tata*)."[75]

Simon Sasae delineates a range of Roviana expexctations of photography and suggests that to have one's photograph taken is to be truthfully imitated (*tavete luli*). *Tavete* translates as 'to make', and *luli* as 'to follow', as in following a path, and together they convey a sense of 'imitation', with the phrase retaining overtones of actions and physical connections. *Hinokara* is used in the sense of 'true' and also 'real, as in *tie hinokara* - the real people - often used by Roviana people to refer to themselves. The use of *tata* invokes not only closeness as in physical proximity, but also the closeness that is associated with almost being something else. The use of particular Roviana terms to describe what a photograph is, reveal that Simon's conceptions of photography as a medium are focussed on its mimetic possibilities. As he handles the few photographs he possesses and talks to me about them, it is with a sense of wonder at their mimetic magic, their ability to make a double of this world. Simon Sasae, like the majority of older Roviana people (Simon is in his 60's), has a fragmentary knowledge of photographic processes. He cannot explain how a photograph is made in terms of any Euro-American technical model, but he can

[74] *Tome* refers to a general sense of out of sight
[75] Simon Sasae, Dunde 10/3/01

describe how one is 'taken' in his own terms. This should not then, be interpreted as a deficit of knowledge or a failure to understand the true 'nature' of photography. It is, rather, a lack of concern with processes that are not important in establishing either the uses of photographs, or their authority in Roviana. The technical processes of negative and positive and the play of light on film, are not necessary features of his understanding of photography. What is important to him is photography's capacity for making "true" copies - a concern with photography as mimesis.

Benjamin has argued that the re-surfacing of the primitive in modernity is centred around mimesis; "every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction".[76] This is the dual sense of mimesis which, as Michael Taussig has suggested, concerns not just a copy or an imitation but "a palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived."[77] For Benjamin the 'aura' of art works and cult objects was altered through the inception of mimetic machines such as the camera. These introduced new subject-object relations and therefore created new persons. But this does not represent the triumph of science over magic, for the camera opens up the optical unconscious and "make[s] the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable." [78]

In Roviana the photograph is a material relic that is animated by *maqomaqo*, but how does it fit with other mimetic schemes? Is the indexical focus of colonial photography a requirement of Roviana uses of the medium? Do photographs constitute 'facts about which there can be no question' for Roviana people? Simon traces his outline on a worn photograph of himself with his finger and talks of his desire for photographs;

> "I want the photograph (*maqomaqo*) so I can keep (*kopunia*) myself. It is a true picture (*pikisa*). I can copy (*kumberia*) myself. If I do not have a photograph I will

[76] Benjamin 1992 p.
[77] Taussig 1993 p.21
[78] Benjamin 1985 p.244

not see how I was. My children will have nothing to remember me. I want to come out good in the photograph [pointing to the photograph of himself]."[79]

Here the expectations of the photograph revolve around its memorial potential, a potential which is underwritten by its status as a "true" copy. But how is this copy constructed? Simon also talked about how photographs are made;

"The photograph (*maqomaqo*) takes something true from you. It is a true thing. This camera (*kamera*)[pointing at my camera] takes your shadow (*maqomaqo*) and makes (*tavete*) it here [holding up a photograph of himself]."[80]

When Simon talks about the camera 'taking' something and then 'making' it in the photograph, it is with the sense of a direct physical continuity between the person in front of the camera and the photographic print - this is the "palpable, sensuous connection" that Taussig refers to.

Early conceptions of photography talked about a 'mirror with a memory'. To be photographed was like looking in a mirror and having that image fixed. From now on it would be possible to encounter your double. The 'mirror' of photography offered both the security of possession, an object to be handled, but also created an anxiety around self-possession - others could now get hold of your image. The mimetic faculty concerns the notion that the image can affect what it is an image of - Frazer's 'sympathetic magic'. Frazer distinguished between magic involving similarity and that involving contact. The former involves the notion of the copy and the representation which possesses the same qualities as the thing represented. Of the second 'law', he says that it is based on the assumption that "things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed."[81] This is the law of contagion. Both are directly relevant to ideas about photography and also to Roviana representational practices.

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[79] Simon Sasae, Dunde, 10/3/01
[80] ibid

How is this mimetic faculty figured in Roviana? What is the Roviana history of imitation or copying (*kumberia*)? Photography is often thought of as modernising vision, but how does it relate to the development of Roviana 'scopic regimes'?[82] Commenting on Frazer's work, Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert discussed the lack of realism in magically effective mimetic images "there is nothing resembling a portrait" the image, doll or drawing used was only "schematic".[83] Any object can be made into an effigy. Frazer's two laws actually work together rather than being separate. Taussig suggests that;

> "what makes up for this lack of similitude, what makes it a 'faithful' copy, indeed a magically powerful copy...are precisely the material connections - those established by attaching hair, nail cuttings, pieces of clothing, and so forth, to the likeness."[84]

Daguerreotypes often had lockets of hair attached, and photography itself would seem to partake of both Frazer's laws of magic. Not just a visual notion of similitude, but a performative, physiognomic, and tactile relation. For Taussig mimesis is a key feature of colonial histories "it being my assumption that in modern times the two are inseparable."[85]

The ability for shrines to memorialize ancestors includes the use of strangely elongated rocks which have not been carved or treated in any way to represent ancestors, and also their representation through the carving of anthropomorphic figures like *beku*. Do these two forms represent an historical movement from aniconic images to iconic? How does this development relate to ideas of embodiment? If *maqomaqo* can be 'seated' (*hambotuana*) in elongated rocks, why carve human forms? When *beku* are described as identified ancestors, are recognisably individual features required?

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[81] Frazer 1923 p.11
[82] Jay 1988
[83] Mauss and Hubert 1972 p.68
[84] Taussig 1993 p.57

That the kinds of elongated rocks - strange basalt columns found in rivers, like those shown in Plate 75 - represent ancestors reveals one point of a Roviana mimetic scheme. That they were still an active part of Roviana shrines in 1910, clearly maintained and directly adjacent to houses, demonstrates the lack of influence exerted by the mission at this stage. These images of ancestors require ritual activation to empower them, but they are ancestors, and do not rely on any visual similitude for their efficacy. The elongated rocks seem to have co-existed with a range of anthropomorphic carvings (*beku*) of ancestors such as that shown in Plate 76, although Roviana people asserted that the rocks were an "old" way of representing ancestors. *Beku* depicted stylised human forms and were the "seats" of ancestors. Hocart commented on anthropomorphic carvings on Simbo;

> "there were several figures in human form called *kimbo* which were said to be representations of *tuturu* [a type of spirit] ... It was a figure carved out of tree fern about four feet high with a shell over the forehead, two shells in the place of ears, mere traces of arms and a very large penis."[86]

Many *beku* were said by Roviana people to represent "dead relatives", and some could recognise the *beku* in the copy prints I had, despite the fact that many *beku* share the same stylised features. *Beku* often have a pronounced prognathic jaw, similar to the carvings on the prows of tomoko called *nuzunuzu*, and often have lines of either lime or inlaid shell on the face that imitate the decoration applied to the faces of living people, *busa sokovea.* But, although Roviana people said that *beku* were individualised, the intention was not to "copy" the faces of specific ancestors. They often drew an analogy with photography, praising it for its ability to make a "true" copy in comparison to *beku.* A significant change in Roviana representational practices occurred sometime in the late nineteenth or early twentiteth century when carvings in a 'naturalistic' style began to be made locally.[87] Compared to the elongated rocks, these seem to be at the other end of a mimetic

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[85] ibid p.250
[86] Hocart on *mateana* p.20 Dureau transcript
[87] See Kupiainen 2000

Plate 75 “a chief’s grave consisting of a heap of stones with various things sticking out, Rubiana” R.W.Williamson 1 May 1910 Royal Anthropological Institute 11375

Plate 76 “figure on chief’s grave, Kulumbangara [Kolombangara]” R.W.Williamson 1910 Rpyal Anthropological Institute 11436

spectrum. Some of these carvings were commissioned by George Brown who wanted to prove that 'savage' races like the Melanesians actually had abilities that could be improved and were not 'immutably' fixed by race. In particular Brown was concerned to disprove the theory that Melanesians were incapable of "properly" depicting the human form.[88] Brown saw one of these new style of carvings in in Roviana in 1899 (Plate 77). Brown commented that he "saw a very fine wooden carving of a boy carrying a gun, made by a native, from a life model."[89] The suggestion that these carvings were made 'from life' perhaps implied for Brown a shift in representational forms but also an evolutionary scale in which the elongated rocks form one pole, and photographs - seen by Brown and many of his contemporaries as the zenith of European representational and technical prowess - the other.

The carving shown in Plate 78, commissioned by Brown, does seems to represent a totally new form of Roviana representational practice. The figure is overtly 'naturalistic', like that in Plate 77, and both adopt a 'three-dimensional' in a way that *beku* do not. The carving of the woman and baby reveals a strange mixture of the real and the artificial; the lime gourd held in the hand is an actual gourd, and the shell ornament (*hinuili*) around the neck is made from real shell, but the shell rings (*hokata*) on the arms are carved and painted imitations. The delineation of arms and legs, complete with fingers and toes, is not a feature of *beku*, which possess only rudimentary limbs. This 'naturalistic' style of carving seems to have been adopted for some *beku* (Plate 79).

This carving, protected by a sheet of corrugated iron, seems to stand on a mound of coral cobbles and to have several *bakiha* at its base. Again, it is three-dimensional in a way that *beku* are usually not and features a combination of real and imitation elements. The stylised prognathic jaw (see Plate 76) is gone, and the figure adopts a 'realistic' pose. It demonstrates a Roviana willingness to adopt new styles in pursuing existing ends.There are further intriguing suggestions that Roviana people adopted European techniques - Elkington reports that;

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[88] See also Gardner 1999 p.191
[89] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Nov. 6 1899 p.3.

Plate 77 “canoe and image” George Brown 1899 Methodist Archives, Auckland de B19b

Plate 78 “Wooden image of Woman and Baby” George Brown 1899 from Australian Methodist Missionary Review October 8 1902 p.75

Plate 79 “a Roviana idol (still in existence, but more as a curio)”. Goldie standing next to *beku* ca.1910 Methodist Archives, Auckland de B19a

> "the natives are very fair draughtsmen, and some of their drawings are suprisingly good. Shark fishing, head-hunting, and scenes of murder, are amongst their favourite pictures...All the drawings are done on wood with a red-hot stick, in much the same way as poker-work is done in England...Nowadays the natives beg a little iron or wire, which they make red hot and go to work with to burn out their designs."[90]

Roviana people seem to have been delighted at some Euro-American mimetic technologies, as Elkington and Hardy reported in the first decade of the twentieth century;

> "we witnessed the delight and wonder of the natives, both here and at Mr. Wickham's, at the phonograph, just introduced, especially when they heard their own speeches reproduced by the machine."[91]

Early Euro-American responses to photography in the 1840's frequently revolved around a dialectic of the strange and the familiar. A sense of wonder, and sometimes fear, mixed with recognition. Not only was the nature of the new medium at issue, but also questions of its social uses; to what ends was photography to be used? Hocart's account of the reaction of Simbo islanders to photographs (above) suggest that they were understandable in terms of both their social and magical uses, rather than the subject of any incomprehension of the reproductive techniques involved with their production. Images in Roviana were concerned with the mimetic possibilities of embodying ancestors and spirits and the photographic image was grasped in these terms. The process of ascribing power to the mimetic techniques of others worked in both directions. Euro-American reactions to Roviana objects, outside of the missions' concern with "idols", were often equally strong;

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[90] Elkington 1907 p.131-2

"Upon the bookcase of my living-room stands a Roviana head. The features are beautifully modelled with a kind of putty made from the tita-nut...the base is an actual skull, the putty being laid over it...Today it is almost impossible to acquire more of these heads, the art of making them having become a thing of the past. Before I was married I had sent my fiancée a photograph of the interior of my house and in it appeared the head. When the time should come for her to come to the Islands, she told me, the heads would have to go, for she could not tolerate such a grim spectacle all and every day. When I first acquired it and had it in my office, set upon a plan case, it often used to startle me when I looked up, so human was its appearance...After removing it from my office to my house, in order to prevent the numerous interruptions of which it had been the cause, I was frequently momentarily alarmed at the appearance in the living-room of the black apparition staring wide-eyed into space...all our visitors comment upon its human appearance, and shudder when they are told that it really contains a human skull. The bone can be seen inside, for there is an opening at the base uncovered by the tita, and an axe-mark may be observed, showing that the victim met with a sudden and violent death."[92]

The disturbing object that Knibbs refers to is known in Roviana as a *kibo* (Plate 80). These were the over-modelled skulls of ancestors complete with shell inlay tracing eyes and the lines of lime (*busa sokovea*) on the faces of the living, and fibre hair. This ritual transformation of a bodily relic was usually applied to skulls acquired in raids. Although most skulls placed in the *paele* were unidentified, those of chiefs or warriors sometimes had shell ornaments (*hinuili*) attached to them or were turned into *kibo* to allow them to be identified with particular individuals.[93] Roviana people I spoke to said that the practice was carried out to enable people to remember specific individuals more effectively, and stressed that the ability to visualise them was enhanced by the over-modelling. In this sense *kibo* can be seen as related to photographs, particularly daguerreotypes, in their

[91] ibid. See also Elkington 1907 p.109 which mentions a Roviana chief having an old musical box which he asks Hardy to 'make him sing'. See also Taussig 1993 for more on reactions to gramaphones.
[92] Knibbs 1929 p.31-32
[93] Aswani 2000 p.64.

combination of visual representation and physical trace to produce a mnemonic object. That this treatment was only applied to the skulls acquired through raiding, and not to the skulls of ancestors, suggests that there were prohibitions surrounding the representation of ancestors. Jari Kupiainen reports that on Gatokae (in eastern New Georgia) *kibo* is the name given to various kinds of carvings and statues of ancestors, and *kibo chalivi* (*chalivi* – head) is used to refer to what I have been describing here as *kibo*.[94] He suggests that *kibo chalivi* were made from the skulls of particularly venerated ancestors and were kept in people's houses rather than at shrines because of fears that they would be stolen.

> "When I first saw a photograph I was afraid. I thought they were real (*hinokara*) people in there. I did not want to make those people angry. I thought they could still move around. They would possess (*tagoa*) me. The photograph would take me. I thought the photograph was carved (*peqoa*) or they must have done something else on the paper because the *beku* I saw is true. Some photographs are like *beku*, others are like people. Photographs are true. They were made by white people (*tie vaka*). Some were drawn (*doveni*) others were made to resemble/re-live (*titila*[95]). Photographs reveal (*va vuraia*[96]) what happened, we can still see it today."[97]

James Pitu first saw a photograph in the 1940's, again these were photographs belonging to the Methodist mission. Sprague has discussed the way photographs have replaced Yoruba carved twin-figures, *ibeji*.[98] The photograph participates in the rituals associated with the death of a twin, standing in for the dead sibling in the same way that the wooden carving used to.[99] In Roviana, the mimetic powers of photographs are appropriated into local shemes of representation, but in what sense have they replaced earlier forms of representing ancestors? In their approaches to photographs are Roviana people treating them as images which are, as Hans Belting has suggested, are "before the era of art"?[100]

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[94] Kupiainen 2000 p.42
[95] *Titila* refers to a sense of repeating an action in order to re-live it. It is said to have originally been a term for shooting an arrow in the approximate position of a missing one in order to find it.
[96] This contains the active sense of causing to appear.
[97] James Pitu, Nusa Roviana 5/5/01.
[98] Sprague 1978
[99] ibid. p.57

In discussing the uses of icons in medieval Europe, Belting provides what might equally describe the role of photography in Roviana;

> "authentic images seemed capable of action, seemed to possess *dynamis*, or supernatural power. God and the saints also took up their abode in them, as was expected, and spoke through them. People looked to such images with an expectation of beneficence, which was often more important to the believer than were abstract notions of God or an afterlife."[101]

This 'cult of images' treated them like persons - this is how photography is like headhunting.

Skulls

Historically, ancestral spirits and their power were associated with shrines, including those containing ancestral skulls and other material artefacts, and ideas about embodiment in relation to shrines are inflected in contemporary attitudes towards photography. Roviana shrines (*hope*[102]) fall into four broad categories; those concerned directly with ancestor worship, usually containing skulls; those for ensuring productivity which are concerned with magic for gardening, fishing, and hunting; those dedicated to specific non-human spirits; and those connected with cleansing and purification. Roviana people continue to personally recall specific ancestors, and invoke their power, particularly when visiting garden shrines or when practising fishing magic, but my focus

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[100] Belting 1994

[101] ibid p.6

[102] The Roviana word *hope,* although generally taken as meaning 'shrine', actually contains the broader meanings of 'forbidden', and stems from the word *hopena*, 'sacred'. Waterhouse translates *hope* as "the general name for sacred places especially where skulls are placed, hence *hopena*, sacred, taboo; *va hopena*, to make sacred; *hope nedara*, a skull repository built of flat stones" (Waterhouse 1928 p.30). The pijin phrase *tambu ples* is often used today to refer in a more generalised, and occasionally vague way, to any old sites or features connected with prohibitions. Some sites associated with ancestors are considered *hope*, while others are not, and distinctions between mythological or sacred sites, and actual shrines for worship are often hard to make, since the former do not necessarily require man-made structures in order to qualify as *hope.*

Plate 80 Over-modelled human skull (*kibo*). Henry Somerville. 1893-4 Royal Anthropological Institute Lantern-slide 634

here will be on shrines associated solely with ancestor worship.[103] These sites, and the material culture associated with them, were those most commonly referred to when relating stories about artefacts that represent or embody individual ancestors, and when discussing the relations between photographs and ancestral spirits.

Skull shrines are dedicated to chiefs and those of chiefly descent - Hocart recorded that "chiefs have a kind of family tomb"[104] - although they also contained the skulls of ancestors other than chiefs.[105] Skulls could be placed in already existing shrines, but a new one was usually built after the death of a prominent chief, and the spirits of dead chiefs formed a special class called "*mate mbangara*".[106] The skull-house came into being as a monument or memorial along with a representational complex that involved the veneration of ancestors skulls and the use of captured heads from headhunting raids, when previously inland populations gradually resettled on the coast in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[107] Earlier inland populations neither used shrines as repositories of skulls, nor built skull-houses. At the time of this coastal resettlement, new chiefly lineages were established which claimed descent from *mateana*, a class of divine beings, ancestral connections to which became one of the prerequisites of chiefly power.[108] At the same time a new range of cultural media, such as *bakiha* and other shell valuables, were developed which facilitated processes of memorialisation and the maintenance of direct connections with ancestors. Through the skulls kept at shrines the

[103] Contemporary Roviana people, particularly those of the older generation, frequently call on the help of specific ancestors when they are out fishing or working in their gardens. These practices, which often include the physical intervention of the ancestor through actions such as rocking the canoe (betuebetue?) when asked to indicate which areas might be good for fishing, are differentiated from those involved with ancestral spirits that are tied to specific sites or objects. Christian graves have replaced skull shrines, but in terms of material culture nothing has replaced garden and fishing magic. Shrines are both "things of the past", and a part of 'everyday life'. Although they may not be actively maintained, shrines remain important in establishing ancestral sanctions and are bound up with land disputes and approaches to landscape (see T.Thomas et al 2001).

[104] Hocart n.d. p.13

[105] Hocart reports that, although female chiefs (*bangara maqota*) certainly existed prior to the coming of the mission and, although they may have been able to order their building, the skulls of female ancestors were not placed in shrines (Hocart n.d. p.13). However, Hocart 1922 Part II p.263 reports that the heads of women who had committed suicide by hanging were kept.

[106] Hocart n.d. p.13. Dureau suggests that "*mate*" is a mis-transcription of *tomate*

[107] Aswani 2000 p.44

[108] ibid. p.44

priest (*hiama*[109]) communicated with ancestral spirits and with god (*tamasa*), and the sanction or efficacious blessing (*tinamanai*) of ancestors was a prerequisite of authority amongst the living.[110] The living and the dead were bound together in a reciprocal relation. "The skulls of chiefs (*bangara*) when conserved in shrines provide material connections to powerful ancestors."[111] Skull shrines are processual monuments; "power or efficacy derived from ancestors is materialised, channelled and circulated through an interconnected set of cultural media."[112]

Although many of the skulls in *oru* were undifferentiated, those of particularly important individuals were sometimes marked out by attaching various shell valuables to the skull, sometimes with an elaborate network of plaited string. The Methodist missionary George Brown visited a shrine on Simbo in 1901 which consisted of several skull-houses, some of which had 20-30 skulls in them, but he found that "one of them had only two which were evidently those of some superior persons, as the skulls were highly ornamented with rings and other valuable shell property."[113] After ritual preparation the skull of the deceased was placed in a skull-house (*oru*), a roofed structure of varying size.[114] Roviana skull-houses were usually raised off the ground on one or more posts and situated on top of a mound of coral cobbles. They can be divided into two types, circular-roofed and gable-roofed. The latter had a roof of thatch, wooden boards, or coral slabs, and had a wooden board (*leva*) with carved and/or painted designs. They could also feature small carved figures, like miniature *beku*, on their supporting posts (Plate 81). *Leva* from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century often included representations of a human figure, usually taken to be a chief, standing in a war canoe and holding a metal-bladed axe of European origin in one hand, and a shell-valuable, usually taken to be a *bakiha*, in the other. According to Deborah Waite, this juxtaposition of representations of Roviana

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[109] There were two types of *hiama*; those associated solely with the ritual preparation of ancestral skulls, and those concerned with other less hazardous ritual functions. The former were usually foreigners from other islands because of the dangerous nature of their tasks (Aswani 2000 note 21 p.69)
[110] ibid. p.59
[111] Sheppard et al 2000 p.11
[112] ibid. p.13
[113] Brown in Australian Methodist Missionary Review XL 1901 p.1 (also quoted in Waite 2000 p.125)
[114] Although skulls were also kept in caves and wave notches (see Nagaoka 1999 p.114). There are similarities between *oru* and the *zelepade*, a ritual men's house (see Aswani (New Georgia Archaeological Survey 1998) for an account of the *zelepade*).

Plate 81 “a chief’s grave in the shape of a cottage with a ridge with a little man idol in it” May 1910 R.W.Williamson Royal Anthropological Institute 11392

and European artefacts importantly "fused indigenous with imported manifestations of power".[115] Hocart reported that on one occasion he witnessed on Simbo, a European style coffin was used to "hide" the body of the deceased immediately after death, although the head was later removed, treated, and placed in a skull-house.[116] He also talked of corrugated iron replacing thatch as a roofing material for skull-houses in 1908.[117] Artefacts of European origin were frequently incorporated as part of ancestral shrines alongside shell-valuables. Imported media and their efficacy, *mana*, were co-opted for indigenous ends. Several older Roviana people said that photographs were added to ancestral shrines in the 1920's and 30's, but given the scarcity of indigenous access to photography during this period it could only have occurred in very isolated cases. No consistently prescribed model for skull-houses seems to have existed, rather they were constructed from a range of elements, differing constellations of which were articulated in particular instances.

Ancestral shrines are sites which involve, and indeed establish, important connections between embodiment, vision, and ancestral power. Contemporary Roviana people describe the opening on the wooden *leva* as a "door" for the spirit or soul, an aperture which allowed it to enter and leave the skull-house. Waite has suggested that the oval designs depicted on the doors of skull-houses resemble the prows of war canoes[118], but Roviana people I consulted said these patterns were "eyes". Faletau asserted that; "they are big eyes. They are eyes that can bite. The spirit is alive and it looks at you."[119] Visiting an ancestral shrine to leave offerings involved encountering ancestral spirits who could see you, and accounts of earlier practices stress the important role of vision in effective communication between the dead and the living.

> "When they (*tie pukerane*) visited a shrine they saw their ancestors. They could talk to their ancestors. Their ancestors were there and they replied to them. Their

[115] Waite 2000 p.123
[116] Hocart Part 1 1922 p.98
[117] ibid p.104
[118] Waite 2000 p.126. Eyes were a feature of *leve* and *zelepade* and early Methodist churches, such as the one on Nusa Roviana, were made like *zelepade* (Plate?)
[119] Faletau Leve, Dunde 11.4.01

ancestors heard them and saw them. When they saw them their ancestors would give their blessing (*tinamanae*)."[120]

This reciprocity of seeing, and being seen, resembles Hindu notions of 'darsan'; "to stand in the presence of the deity and to behold the image with one's own eyes; to see and be seen by the deity."[121] In Hindu belief the deity is present in the image, so seeing the image constitutes an act of worship, and there is a tactility of vision associated with 'darsan';

> "seeing, according to Indian notions, is a going forth of the sight towards the object. Sight touches it and acquires its form. Touch is the ultimate connection by which the visible yields to being grasped. While the eye touches the object, the vitality that pulsates in it is communicated".[122]

Eyes are prominent features of Hindu images, and it is through the eyes that contact between deity and devotee is established. A similar visual physicality is invoked in Roviana prohibitions against allowing your shadow to fall on skull shrines;

> "Your shadow (*maqomaqo*) should not go before you when you go to a shrine. The eyes of the *beku* can see you, they can trap (*sipata*) you. If you let your shadow fall on the shrine you will be sick. The spirits (*tomate*) will take (*palekia*) your shadow. Your shadow (*maqomaqo*) will get sick and fall (*vuvusu*[123]).[124]

Such accounts demonstrate that your shadow, your *maqomaqo*, is susceptible to being 'taken'; it is vulnerable to predation from angry spirits. Older people talk of how they were told not to look directly at the camera when they had their photograph taken; if they

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[120] Pitim Bule, Kokeqolo 26/1/01
[121] Eck 1981 p.3
[122] Kramrisch 1976 p.136 quoted in Eck 1981 p.9
[123] *Vuvusu* contains a sense of dispersal and dissolution - Waterhouse translates it as "to fall, as dust from a dirty roof; to fall, as leaves..." (Waterhouse 1928 p.133) - as opposed to *hoqa* which is used in reference to an object falling.
[124] Faletau Leve, Dunde 27/4/01

did then the camera would take their *maqomaqo*. The visual is bound up with obtaining ancestral blessing, but is also a source of potential danger.

When you talked to an ancestral spirit at a shrine;

> "The spirit answered by shaking you around. This is called *samsambukai* when it happened on land, and *betubetue* on water. This is how the spirits speak to you. You ask a question and they answer you by possessing you and shaking you. You hold the *bakiha* so you can contact the ancestors spirit. You had to show the charm to your father before he died otherwise the charm would not work, he would not answer you. When I talk to my father's spirit it covers me and talks to me. I feel like I am standing up in the air, my feet are not on the ground."[125]

The possibilities of embodiment and the association of ancestral skulls with *mana*[126] are closely tied to Roviana head-hunting practices. Headhunting in the western Solomons has been the subject of extended academic debates which have generally revolved around the influence, or not, of European contact on the level of raiding and the inflation of the ritual system involved with the taking of heads.[127] Recent contributions to this debate have suggested that large-scale predatory head-hunting was not a direct result of sustained contact with Europeans and other outsiders in the 19th century, while acknowledging that the latter undoubtedly did have a significant influence.[128] Shankar Aswani has argued that through head-hunting "Roviana chiefs and their kin...were able to secure their own regional ritual, social, and political hegemony by constructing a quantifiable 'currency of rank' out of persons' detached parts".[129] After being ritually inactivated skulls taken in raids were placed in the *paele*.[130] The skulls of prominent victims were kept as

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[125] Donald Maepio, Dunde 3/2/01

[126] For a further discussion of *mana* see Hocart 1925 pp.260-261, Williamson 1914 p.71-72, 80 and Keesing 1982a pp.46-49

[127] For a summary of the arguments involved see Aswani 2000

[128] Aswani 2000 p.40

[129] ibid p.40 The process involved a blurring of persons and things, human beings were sometimes referred to as 'pigs' or 'bonito' when recording the number of victims taken in head-hunting raids. The jaws of pigs, the skulls of frigate-birds, and turtle skulls were also kept and displayed in the *paele*.

[130] The skulls of prominent chiefs or warriors were sometimes placed in the *zelepade* (ritual war-house), and those of common people were sometimes buried under paths, where walking over them constituted a

"heirlooms" for display and were sometimes offered as prestations to Roviana ancestors and deities in the same way as captive children (*veala*) and 'slaves' were ritually sacrificed.[131]

In relation to head-hunting McKinnon has argued that "one of the most direct ways of obtaining influence was to take the life force residing in another human being, centred in the head. It could therefore be obtained by taking the person's skull."[132] Taking the heads of your enemies was an opportunity to acquire the "soul value" inherent in them. In contrast Aswani insists that;

> "keeping the head of a Roviana chief or relative was an act of ritual consecration, a means to subsequently secure the power of the ancestors as vectored through the skull's physical presence. The skulls of enemies however, stood as those of strangers and objectifiable others. Consumed vessels containing nothing that could be supernaturally taken (i.e., *mana*) but, rather, something that could be supernaturally denied."[133]

Headhunting was a way of denying your enemies access to their own ancestral *mana*. The relatives of someone whose head had been taken in a raid "would replace the captured head by making a statue (*beku*) in the dead person's image (*vina-tigono*) in the hope of propitiating the departed spirit."[134] This suggests that, like the ritual transformation of enemy skulls into *kibo*, representation of ancestors is only resorted to if the actual relic, the skull, is itself unavailable. Presence is the primary aim, not representation.

Successful head-hunting raids conducted by chiefs manifested their *mana*; "enemy skulls thus acted as mnemonics of their power, of their being blessed in warfare, as in other

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further desecration, and also had the effect of preventing revenge-seeking spirits from re-emerging from the skulls.

[131] ibid p.55

[132] McKinnon 1975 p.301

[133] Aswani 2000 p.55

[134] ibid note 13 p.68. Although special plants were attached to the *beku* to aid in the transfer of ancestral power, the power it "channelled" was not as strong as that effected by the actual skull.

enterprises."[135] The relevance of enemy skulls was not in the *mana* or 'soul-substance' they contained, but in the channels of "*mana*-ization" they opened up.[136] "Sanction is demonstrated through the successful acquisition of skulls, which became a material token of the efficacy or *mana* bestowed by those ancestors on chiefs who organise, fund and lead head-hunting expeditions. Head-hunting connects the living and the dead and provides material evidence of the will of the ancestors in the decision-making of the living."[137] Exercising authority in Roviana required the positive sanction of the dead, the ancestors from whom all power ultimately derives, and this continues to be a feature of contemporary efficacy.

Skull-shrines are dynamic media, not just in the sense that they are monuments that were concerned with maintaining active links with ancestors, but media that have changed and evolved. The skull-shrine associated with *banara* Inqava serves as an example of some of the changes that processes of '*mana*-ization' have undergone from the 1900's onwards (see Plates 82, 83 and 84).

The shrine is situated on a tiny island, Kundu Hite, at the mouth of Vona Vona lagoon, and was moved there from Sisiata in Munda sometime in the early twentieth century. This was possibly a response to the arrival of the Methodist mission – some shrines were relocated to avoid attention from the missionaries - Brown talked of Ingava "retiring" to Kundu island.[138] The shrine consists of a carved wooden skull-house containing skulls and shell-valuables and with a *leva* depicting a chief holding a *bakiha* and an axe of European origin. The skull-house sits on top of a large extended mound of coral cobbles containing many other skulls. One of the skulls it contains is supposedly that of Inqava himself, who died in 1906, Luxton talks of Inqava's skull being placed in "its last resting place in a decorated shelter on an island in the lagoon".[139] The island and the shrine

[135] Dureau 2000 p.88 (my emphasis).
[136] Aswani 2000 p.56 (quoting Hviding 1996 p.91)
[137] Sheppard et al 2000 p.11
[138] Brown 1908 p.517

[139] Luxton 1955 p.41

Plate 82 *oru* on Kudu Hite

Plate 83 *oru* on Kudu Hite

Plate 84 *oru* on Kudu Hite

feature as "Skull Island" in local tourist tours and, for a "kastom fee" and the cost of hiring a boat to get there, tourists can visit the island and take photographs of the skulls. Images of the shrine appear in tourist leaflets and in this arena it is an iconic representation of Roviana history and 'headhunting'.

An earlier incarnation of the shrine was described by Count Festetics De Tolna when he visited Roviana in 1895;

> "In the bush at Rubiana a monument was erected to the glory of King Ingova to commemorate the hunt that he conducted. It is a sort of cross in stone [?] and widens at the base [and] is placed on a mound of coral rocks. Out of a mosaic of shells and mother-of-pearl on the head of the cross is represented a person standing in a canoe between two much smaller paddlers ... The monument is sheltered by a tent whose cloth rests on posts with which it is fastened by chains. The natives go piously to take their offerings to the monument. They consist generally of human heads that are flung into the coral at the foot of the cross and where they are shattered. Those who are not able to procure real heads make do with imitations made from coconuts in which they cut eyes, nose and mouth. I had the impudence to pick up one of these heads for my collection, but the natives who saw me became so furious that I quickly had to put it back."[140]

Since Inqava did not die until 1906 von Tolna might be mistaken about this being a monument to Inqava - as opposed to the ancestral shrine associated with his *butubutu* and the source of his *mana* - but his account reveals processes of imitation and substitution. Headhunting, despite several sporadic outbursts, was on the decline in the first decade of the twentieth century and the substitution of coconuts for human heads was perhaps a result of this decline. This 'monument' to Inqava is a hybrid object. There are several Christian graves close to the skull-shrine on Kudu Hite, testimony to the enduring power

[140] Festetics de Tolna 1903 pp.328-323 (translated by Waite and quoted in Waite 2000 pp.127-128)

Plate 85 Monument to Inqava from Festetics von Tolna 1903 p.334

of proximity and place in Roviana, and on one of the graves sits a small almost completely illegible photograph in a small metal frame.[141] Although it is only bearly recognisable as a human face, this photographic monument is now a medium for efficacious connections with ancestors. Ideas of embodiment and effective connections to ancestors continue to be important for contemporary Roviana people. One of the ways these connections are maintained is through photographs of ancestors which function as relics. T.W.Edge-Partington's obituary for Inqava, complete with photographic portrait, is another kind of 'monument' (Plate 86).[142]

As Morgan points out, a Euro-American discourse on images that denies or denigrates their materiality leads us to think that the deity cannot be represented in material form; the more spiritually developed a religion is the less need it has for material objects to serve as a channel to the deity.[143] Aswani talks of "the contextual mutability of persons and objects"[144] in relation to Roviana attitudes towards ancestral skulls and headhunting and the expectations and uses of photographs in contemporary Roviana display a similar mutability.

[141] Although it was permissible for me to take photographs of the skull-shrine, particularly as this is a 'tourist site', it is not considered wise to photograph the Christian graves.
[142] Edge-Partington 1907
[143] Morgan 1998

[144] Aswani 2000 p.65

Plate 86 obituary for Inqava from Man 1907

Resurrection II

> "Photography has something to do with resurrection: (might we not say of it what the Byzantines said of the image of Christ which impregnated St.Veronica's napkin: that it was not made by the hand of man, acheiropoietos ?)"[145]

Among the range of images displayed on one wall in Chris Mamupio's house is a framed photograph of his father, Simon Mamupio (Plates 87 and 88). The wall is a display site that confronts anyone visiting Chris; its striking colour and the images make it the focal point of the room. For Chris this is an image which is especially "strong" and, when he talks about it he does so in the reverential tone which is a feature of stories about ancestors. The "*maqomaqo*" was taken in 1974 by an official from New Zealand when Simon was inaugurated as a chief in Dunde. British, Australian, and New Zealand officials, as well as tourists, all came to the ceremony and feast (*inevana*) that established Simon as a chief "for looking after people", the "last big chief" in Munda.[146] The photograph shows Simon with his "lieutenant" seated behind him. The latter wears a shirt and tie, but Simon himself wears a woven eye-shade, *toropai*, and *kabilato*. These, together with his pierced and elongated earlobes, are visual markers of Simon's connections with "the time before" (he was the last generation of Roviana men to have their ears pierced). Chris made the photograph's wooden frame himself after his father died in order to "keep him safe". Simon died in 1991 and "after that there was no respect anymore". Chris told me why the photograph was so important;

> "Some people worry about the spirit in the photograph (*debil long pikisa*), but I get power from it. I get blessing (*tinamanai*) from my father when I look at the photograph...It makes me dream (*putagita*) about him. I talk to the photograph, that

[145] Freedberg 1989 p.440

[146] There have been problems with appointing a successor to Simon Mamupio.

Plate 87 Images on the wall of Chris Mamupio's house

Plate 88 Simon Mamupio

is why I put it on the wall. I sit with him. My daughter has a copy of the photograph that she speaks with. The photograph can give a gift, it has power. People can see him."[147]

Chris talks to his father at his Christian grave, and talking to his photograph is an equivalent process; both allow him access to ancestral sanction. Chris's performance of the photograph includes showing me his drawing of a stepped genealogical 'pyramid', with earlier generations forming the base and himself at the apex. He is happy that the photograph shows Simon's whole body because "you need to see the whole body to make a good photograph. If you only see the head then people cannot see true". Chris has fourteen photographs and, apart from one of him and his father which was taken by his daughter Sarah, all of them were taken by other Roviana people or outsiders. When he first saw a photograph in the 1930's, Chris called it a *maqomaqo*, and this is also how he refers to the religious prints on his wall, acquired through his daughter who works in Honiara. For Chris the image of Christ and the photograph of his father both conjure up a presence. David Morgan has talked about the use of religious imagery, like the image of Christ on Chris's wall, in late twentieth century north America;

> "when devout viewers see what they imagine to be the actual appearance of the divinity that cares for them, the image becomes an icon. The icon is experienced by believers as presenting some aspect of the real thing...as if standing before the image is to enjoy the very presence of its referent."[148]

For Chris the photograph of his father is an icon. He remembers that when he was young having your photograph taken was called being drawn or 'copied', "*kumkumbere*". Chris refers to other photographs as "*maqomaqo na pepa*", the shadow on the paper, but his photograph of his father is "a different one";

[147] Chris Mamupio, Dunde 24/2/01.
[148] Morgan 1998 p.43

"The camera (*kamera*) takes something, something inside a person. When someone dies their soul (*maqomaqo*) leaves them. You can see it. People before thought that the camera would take something out of your body and you would become weak and sick. The spirit (*debil*) at a shrine could take your soul if you let your shadow fall on the shrine. People thought that the camera and the radio were dangerous things and they were frightened of them when they first saw them. But I think photographs are strong. With this photograph (*maqomaqo*) I can remember my father. When I look at the photograph my father sees me. I ask him questions and he answers. The photograph is like a *beku*. You look at the *beku* and the *beku* sees you."[149]

In relation to European attitudes towards images, Freedberg argues that responses that rely on notions of presence rather than representation, transcend cultural and chronological differences.[150] Is this the case with Chris' response to the embodiment effected by the photograph of his father? Stories about the animism of others, like the Hocart account referred to earlier, are bound up with attempts to establish a distance from such beliefs. Yet, a certain animism continues to haunt Euro-American approaches towards, and uses of, photography despite, or perhaps because of, its disavowal. There was a discourse of animism that revolved around photography's inception in Europe, North America and elsewhere, alongside any rhetoric of progress and science. Trachtenberg has suggested that the "animistic tropes in [early] written accounts of photography can be taken as a return, at the site of an image, of guilty, repressed beliefs in the old animistic universe expelled by Christianity, reason and science".[151] Achieving 'modernity' involved an attempt to displace notions of animism onto others; stories about photographs 'stealing souls' are part of this process.

Chris Mamupio's photograph of his father provides him with access to ancestral sanction and power, and in the sense that it embodies his fathers spirit, it is a relic that fulfils some of the same roles as ancestral skulls. The photograph has replaced the monument. But,

[149] Chris Mamupio, Dunde 1/3/01
[150] Freedberg 1989 p.32

although they may be of great importance in connecting individuals to ancestors, photographs possess little of the public sanction that was inherent in monuments such as skulls and shrines. One of the motivations for Chris's display of the photograph of his father is so that "people can see him". The image acts as evidence of Chris's genealogy. Even though photographs are addressed as ancestors were, and maintain a connection for individuals, they have no connection to places. The topography that is mapped by photographs in Roviana is social, not geographic as is the case with shrines. Individuals get blessing from photographs of their ancestors, and photographs make ancestors present, but they are not public symbols in the sense that shrines were and, to an extent, still are. Roviana people state that photographs are "strong" for those with personal connections to them.

Post-mortem photography, of the kind discussed by Jay Ruby as widely popular in nineteenth century north American vernacular photographic practices,[152] is completely unknown in Roviana. Any discussions I initiated on the subject quickly revealed people's disquiet, sometimes revulsion, at the thought of such a practice. Some people said that it was *tambu* to look at a photograph of a recently deceased parent, particularly a father. Following the pattern of earlier mortuary practices, and also current Christian ones, which both involve a period of mourning, they suggested that this should only occur after a suitable time had elapsed. To view the photograph before this had happened was risky because the image was "too strong". Chris's photograph of his father was kept safely after they received it in 1975, sent by the New Zealand official. He remembers his father keeping it in a basket with his shell valuables. After his father's death, Chris did not take the photograph out until he had observed the necessary period of mourning. It was only then that he made a frame for it. It was only then that it was fully "seated". Although Chris suggested that the photograph was always a *maqomaqo* - it was always an object that partook of Simon; a presence - after the death of its subject this quality was enhanced.

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[151] Trachtenberg 1989b p.66

One of the other images on the wall of Chris Mamupio's house is a picture he drew of his father, Simon (Plate 89);

> "I made the picture (*pikisa*) of my father so I did not lose him. He was a strong man. It is different from the photograph (*maqomaqo*). I do not talk to him, but with this [pointing at drawing] I can also remember him. When I first[153] saw a photograph I thought it was a drawing (*kumkubere*[154]). We did not know what a camera (*kamera*) was, we thought it was like drawing, but now I know it is a different thing."[155]

What is it that makes the photograph of Simon different from the drawing? In a Euro-American frame this would be a function of discourse of realism and technology, but what about the Roviana response? Chris also goes to Simon's Christian grave to talk to him there, and also has *bakiha* belonging to him. There is a range of objects available to Chris for staying in contact with his father. However, the discourses of Christian faith that have been adopted by Roviana people effectively disavow the use of physical remains functioning as relics in the way that ancestral shrines once did. Christian rhetoric maintains a focus on the departure of the soul, rather than its continued presence. The photograph of his father is one form where his presence can be re-admitted. It allows Chris to draw upon the blessing and sanction of his father and, although photographs do not play a vital role in the reproduction of Roviana polities in the way that shrines and ancestral relics once did, they maintain a physical connection at an individual level. The use of photography in Roviana has led to, or perhaps even initiated, an increasing individualization of memory, at the same time as which it preserves its material dimensions. Similarly, Sprague has suggested that the rise in popularity of photographs as replacements for carved wooden *ibeji* figures in Yoruba ritual practice, is partly a result of the sanctions imposed against such carved images in local Christian and Muslim

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[152] Ruby 1995. This is in contrast to Harris (1999) who says that in pre-1959 Tibet, photos were only made of the dead, while someone was living there was no need to duplicate there presence.
[153] Chris said that the first time he saw a photograph was in the late 1930's. It showed Roviana people with Goldie and belonged to one of the Methodist missionaries in Kokeqolo.
[154] Waterhouse translates *kuberia* as "to draw, to write...*kinube kubere*, a picture" (1928 p.49)
[155] Chris Mamupio, Dunde 7/5/01

Plate 89 Crayon drawing of Simon Mamupio on wooden board. Chris Mamupio. Ca.1995

discourses.[156] The display of photographs on the walls of some contemporary Roviana houses is the equivalent of the efficacy once offered individuals by ancestral shrines. As Binney and Chaplin suggest for Maori practices;

> "the importance of photographs to all Maori who hold traditional values is that they record the images of their ancestors. They exist as a bond between the living and the dead. Portraits of dead kin are hung in the meeting houses to which they belong, so that the continuity, the line of descent, the *iho*, is retained. Photographs are the contemporary extension of the ancestral carved figures, who support the meeting house and the living, and they have been used in this manner since the late nineteenth century...They are addressed during the speeches as if the person himself was present."[157]

Chris' drawing of his father is like a *beku* in the sense that it fulfils many of the same roles, it is also 'carved' by a human hand. But it does not achieve the presence that the photograph does. The drawing locates his father in an imaginary space - Chris tells me that he drew the prow of the *tomoko* and the body of his father "from memory"- and is located temporally in the "time before" (before the mission). When I asked Chris about drawing his father's face he gave me the following account;

> "when I drew (*kuberia*) the face I thought of him. I can remember him with this. The things he did. It is a picture (*pikisa*) not true like the photograph (*maqomaqo*). In the photograph I can see him. He is there."

The photograph of Simon resembles an ancestral skull in its ability to maintain a physical link. There is a strong desire to keep the dead "near", as Lattas suggests for the bush Kaliai who "distort" the talk of missionaries, there was a need "for an accessible form of heaven so they could keep the dead close to them".[158] For Lattas, the responses of the bush Kaliai to the increasing "Christianization" of death has been attempts on their behalf

[156] Sprague 1978 p. 57
[157] Binney & Chaplin 1991 p.442

to reground "the space of death in a concrete locality to prevent it from coming to be formed exclusively into a transcendental heaven that would radically separate the living and the dead."[159] Chris seems to suggest that the drawing allows him to bring forth memories of his father, but it does not function as a relic in the way that the photograph does. Photography holds out a way of Chris remaining in touch with his father. It is a powerful mnemonic technique which, participating in the common work of memory and mourning, acquires the characteristics of earlier rituals that focus on summoning, disclosing and channelling the presence of the dead.

Problems with causal explanations of headhunting are similar to those surrounding the capture of a soul in a photograph. In the mid-nineteenth century the novelist Honoré de Balzac explained photography as a process in which the photographic image was formed by membranes which were lifted off the original, whether person or object, and transported through the air to be physically captured by the photographic plate and apparatus (Plate 90).[160] And as Taussig suggests in relation to Balzac's theory – "who can say we now understand any better?"[161] In considering Roviana conceptions of photography, as with Euro-American ones, the focus needs to remain on networks not territories, on how things are connected, not necessarily causally linked. There is a Euro-American 'magic' of photography, and in this sense Bruno Latour is right, "we have never been modern".[162]

> "People before were afraid of having their photograph taken because they thought it would take away their shadow (*maqomaqo*). They would run away. Only some were comforted and stayed. They had their shadow taken. They had to stand still and their shadow was taken."[163]

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[158] Lattas 1998 p.301
[159] ibid p.302
[160] Quoted in Taussig 1993 p.21
[161] ibid.
[162] Latour 1993
[163] James Pitu 19.2.01

Plate 90 “Seated woman with ‘spirit’ of a young man”. Unknown maker. Tintype ca. 1885

This statement of photography's mimetic power implied in this statement is as relevant to many Euro-American vernacular photographic practices, both historical and contemporary, as it is to Roviana ones. From their inception in the 1830's, daguerreotypes were considered as prospective monuments for the self. Like the individual, they were unique, irreplaceable, and this was the source of their mimetic power. But this mimetic power was also the source of the fears that surrounded early attitudes towards them. They were endowed with a life of their own; they achieved a presence. Daguerreotypists advertised their services with the slogan "seize the shadow ere the substance fade".[164] Daguerreotypes were endowed with a supernatural force that animated them. People were scared of having their image 'taken'.[165] They were 'living pictures', and "in sentimental and celebratory verse they are indeed living spirits, animated shadows, or souls of the dead."[166] In relation to daguerreotypes, Trachtenberg has talked of the "long-repressed belief and feeling that likenesses - shadows as well as reflections in mirror surfaces - are detached portions of living creatures, their soul or spirit".[167] Euro-American photography was a kind of headhunting.[168]

The memorialisation of ancestors pervades contemporary Roviana attitudes towards photographs, and one way in which this discourse is further inflected is through ideas about spirits and their ability to spontaneously appear in photographs. After recording the story of the shrine and *beku* at Sidevele, recounted above, I took a photograph of the remains of the shrine itself. Conversations with landowners and custodians associated with the shrine, assured me that there were now no particular restrictions about taking or making images of this site, so I took a series of photographs. One of the developed prints appeared blurred and people I showed it to told me that this lack of clarity revealed the spirits (*tomate*[169]) associated with the shrine (Plate 91). Younger people talked about this in a joking way, laughing at my "*debil pikisa*", but older people were more serious when

[164] Trachtenberg 1992 p.181
[165] ibid. p.181
[166] Trachtenberg 1989a p.65
[167] ibid. p.66
[168] See also Sobieszek 1999
[169] Waterhouse 1928 p.114-115 definition of *tomate* is "corpse, ghost or spirit"

discussing the photograph with me, stressing that any contact with spirits was potentially dangerous;

> "You can see the spirits (*tomate*) in the photograph (*pikisa*). The photograph reveals (*va vura*) them. You can see their shadow (*maqomaqo*). You can see the spirits of this shrine. They can make you sick."[170]

Photographs that reveal the presence of spirits are themselves objects of fear. On one occasion I was shown a photocopy of a photograph which had achieved some notoriety in Munda. I was advised not to make any kind of copy of the photograph as this in itself could be dangerous; the owner of the photocopy would not keep it with her other photographs or allow it in her bedroom. The photograph was taken by a tourist in 1999 and shows a man from New Zealand sitting on the stump of a felled coconut tree playing a guitar, sitting next to him is a Roviana woman. A vague blurred shape is visible 'behind them' amongst the thatched huts of the resort cottages. "This spirit (*tomate*) is a true one. It shows out in the photograph. I am Christian but I am still scared."[171] People speculated that the spirit revealed in the photograph could be that of a dead child buried on the island but, since the child's grave is on the other side of the island from where the photograph was taken, they could not be sure about this.[172] They suggested that the photograph had probably been taken at dusk when the spirits are active and that the encounter with them had caused the New Zealand man to be ill. I was repeatedly told that photographs could reveal the presence of spirits. Asked how ghosts or spirits could appear in photographs Faletau Leve stated that;

> "Using their power spirits can make material forms. Some photographs are very strong like this, they are electric, they take things from the air and make them

[170] James Pitu, Nusa Roviana 23/4/01
[171] Olive Talasassa 15/3/01

[172] The reasoning behind this assumption that the spirit was that of a dead child is part of a larger narrative concerning the "bad luck" associated with the island and the resort. This was partly put down to the owners having called the child after a dead ancestor, and the prohibitions against this.

Plate 91 shrine at Sidevele

[gesturing with his hands]. The spirit can make things in the photograph. The spirit can stay in the photograph like it stays in a skull.You can see the shadow of the spirits. Something remains of them, the echo (*kokodala*) of those spirits. They reveal themselves in the photograph."[173]

Gillain Beer has discussed European attitudes towards the invisible at the end of the nineteenth century when the great advances made in microscopes, telescopes, and optics of all kinds, including photography, were accompanied paradoxically by a realization that the invisible was;

"a condition within which we move, and <u>of</u> which we are, lateral, extensive, out of human control; worse, not amenable to analysis yet replete with phenomena. The invisible might prove to be a controlling medium, not a place to be explored; a condition of our existence, not a new country to be colonized."[174]

This was the period when studies of the 'ether' were suggesting that it was all-prevading and part of a system in which "'things' themselves proved to be modes of motion rather than stable identities".[175] The mutability that Faletau delineates - a flux between the visible and invisible worlds - suggest that photography in Roviana is a form which can connect the world of the spirits with that of the living. Roger Keesing has suggested that in the context of the Solomon Islands the world of ancestral ghosts and that of anthropological knowledge are "irreconcilably in contradiction".[176] Photographs dispense with that contradiction by revealing the extent to which concerns about the stability of identities are a feature of both Roviana and Euro-American photographic practices. As Jacques Derrida argues; "modern technology, contrary to appearances, although it is scientific, increases tenfold the power of ghosts".[177]

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[173] Faletau Leve, Dunde 22/4/01. It would be interesting to consider Faletau's assertions in the light of the contemporary practice of Kirlian 'aura photography'.
[174] Beer 1996 p. 88
[175] ibid p.85
[176] Keesing 1982a p.296
[177] Derrida 2002 p.115

Disappearance

One of the few photographs that Chris Mamupio owns shows him dressed in a *laplap*, wearing a shell ornament (*hinuili*) and another necklace around his neck, and shell arm rings (*hokata*) (Plate 92). The image was also taken by the anthropologist Gerhard Schneider, who carried out fieldwork in Munda on land disputes in the mid-1990's.[178] The photograph is slowly disappearing, the colours seemingly melting and distorting the image. This decay and the material flux that it implies is the cause of much anxiety for Chris;

> "I am not clear in this. I do not come out good. If I do not come out clear then I can get sick. There is a spirit (*maqomaqo*) that looks at you. This is called *pela* [a kind of Roviana 'evil eye']. The devil (*debildebil*) can eat you."[179]

The disruption of identity that is figured in the photograph concerns a kind of visual ingestion. Earlier Roviana beliefs specified that *kita* - a type of slow wasting disease that reduced the body - was thought to be the work of ghosts. The disappearance of photographs is similarly thought to be the work of malevolent spirits. The concern over the disappearance of photographs and the way in which wholly illegible images like Plate 93 were described to me as "this is Robertson on the beach", demonstrates the mimetic power of these photo-objects in contemporary Roviana. But the rapid degradation of photographic prints turn the living into ghosts, and the decay of the soul that is pre-figured in these photographs threatens the sense of continuing connection to ancestors that photographs can provide in Roviana. As Chris complains; "what will I leave behind? I will not remain (*stap*). How will those that come after remember me?". The 'comforting solidity' of photographs, a feature that underwrites their memorial function, is replaced here by the fear of being forgotten.

[178] Schneider 1996
[179] Chris Mamupio, Dunde 7.5.01

Plate 92 Disappearing photograph of Chris Mamupio. Gerhard Schneider. ca.1995

Plate 93 Illegible photograph. ca.1998

The decay of contemporary photographs is also seen as symbolic of the current state of affairs in Roviana and in the Solomons as a whole. The fact that some black and white photographic prints – those made between 1930 and 1960 - remain "clear" in contrast to colour prints of more recent origin is seen by older Roviana people as a vindication of how things were better "before". Now;

> "Things are bad now. No-one listens to kastom. People before were strong and they listened to kastom. Now things are broken (*bagarap*)."

The civil unrest in the Solomon Islands which was a significant feature of life during the period of my fieldwork, heightened uncertainties about the present and the future. This was brought into further relief by the copy prints of nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs that I had brought with me. Roviana people were amazed that objects that were so old could be so "clear" and my efforts to explain that they were copies were mostly ignored. My suggestions that I could take copies of the fading photographs which could be laminated and therefore potentially last longer, was greeted with some confusion - people were deeply unsure about the status of the resulting copy; "will it make me come out better?" was a frequently asked question. When I pointed out to people that it would not reverse the process of disappearance, people were uninterested. They did ask me to copy other important photographs in order to "keep them good", but their status as copies was seen as suspect and inferior compared to the *maqomaqo*. For most people the idea that I would copy a photograph suggested to them that I would improve it in some way visually, and it was in this hope that they asked me to copy images. But this copying was thought to impair or completely nullify the photographs ability to conjure up a presence. Its role as a mnemonic object was overwhelmingly threatened by the thought of a "copy".

In relation to the connections between images and histories, Belting argues that; "only the portrait, or image, has the presence necessary for veneration, whereas the narrative exists only in the past...in the pictorial history of Christ and the saints, the portrait, or *imago*,

always ranked higher than the narrative image, or *historia*".[180] As well as memory, Roviana ideas about photo-objects are bound up with connections between photography and history, and it is these connections I will turn to next.

[180] Belting 1994 p.10

Plate 94 Disappearing images in photographic album.

Plate 95 Disappearing images in photographic album.

Plate 96 Disappearing photograph of four children on a beach. ca.1995

4. Histories

Faletau's Briefcase

Faletau's executive-style briefcase is slowly falling apart. The black fake-leather surface is scuffed and peeling; the chrome plating on the handle has chipped off and the corroded metal underneath leaves rust stains on your hands when you hold it. Yet despite its delapidated appearance it is one of Faletau's favourite objects, he carries it around the village on important occasions and takes it with him to meetings. When he opens it, it is often with an air of solemnity, a sense of performative gesture; it is a ritual. The heavily stained interior gives off the musty, rotting smell that paper quickly acquires in the intense heat and humidity. It is where "everything is kept" -

several creased, well-handled photographs – a fading, barely decipherable image of a young girl standing by some large plants looking straight at the camera, the colour bleached out to a series of pastel tones – a blurred black and white photograph of a woman standing by a bicycle - a colour Polaroid photograph, with a name and date written on the back, showing a man in a bright red shirt standing by a child

scraps of paper with hand-written commentaries on particular Bible verses

partial genealogies in elaborate geometrical forms drawn on oddly shaped pieces of cardboard

an assortment of pencils and biros – some not working

a cutting - yellowing, torn, and stuck together with tape - from a Solomon Islands newspaper about Faletau's woodcarvings

a postcard of Sydney Opera House from an Australian tourist he met in Munda

drawings that combine Christian symbolism with local animals – hearts, crosses and doves, with crocodiles and sharks

a pair of very scratched black plastic sunglasses

...

Shuffling through these objects Faletau produces a crumpled and worn photocopy. It shows ranks of white-uniformed soldiers standing in front of a large western Solomons canoe-house (Plate 97). Aware of my concern with photographs and history, Faletau has come to find me and reveal this "important history". The image is hard to make out in any detail, reduced as it is to a stark black and white by several generations of photocopying. Faletau has acquired a photocopy of a photocopy that is in the collection of the Cultural Centre in Gizo, a small wooden shed opposite the Gizo Hotel, which has one folder of plastic sleeves containing some twenty or so photocopies and copy prints of nineteenth century photographs of the western Solomons. These were collected and collated by Barabara Riley in the late 1980's.[1] The image's lack of legibility in no way diminishes its significance for Faletau. His fingers handle the stained and rapidly disintegrating sheet of paper delicately as he passes it to me.

The photocopy depicts one moment of what the British authorities described as a 'punitive' raid on Roviana carried out by sailors and marines from HMS Royalist in 1891. But for Faletau there is no expectancy or need to ascribe the event a date - no need to secure it chronologically - and only one or two local people know with any precision the actual date of the event depicted. This is not considered important or necessarily relevant knowledge as far as this photocopy, or indeed many historical events, are concerned. Klaus Neumann reports that, similarly, the Tolai people of Papua New Guinea are vague about dates, where a Western historian would strive for the utmost precision.[2]

[1] Reflections 1991
[2] Neumann 2000 p.67

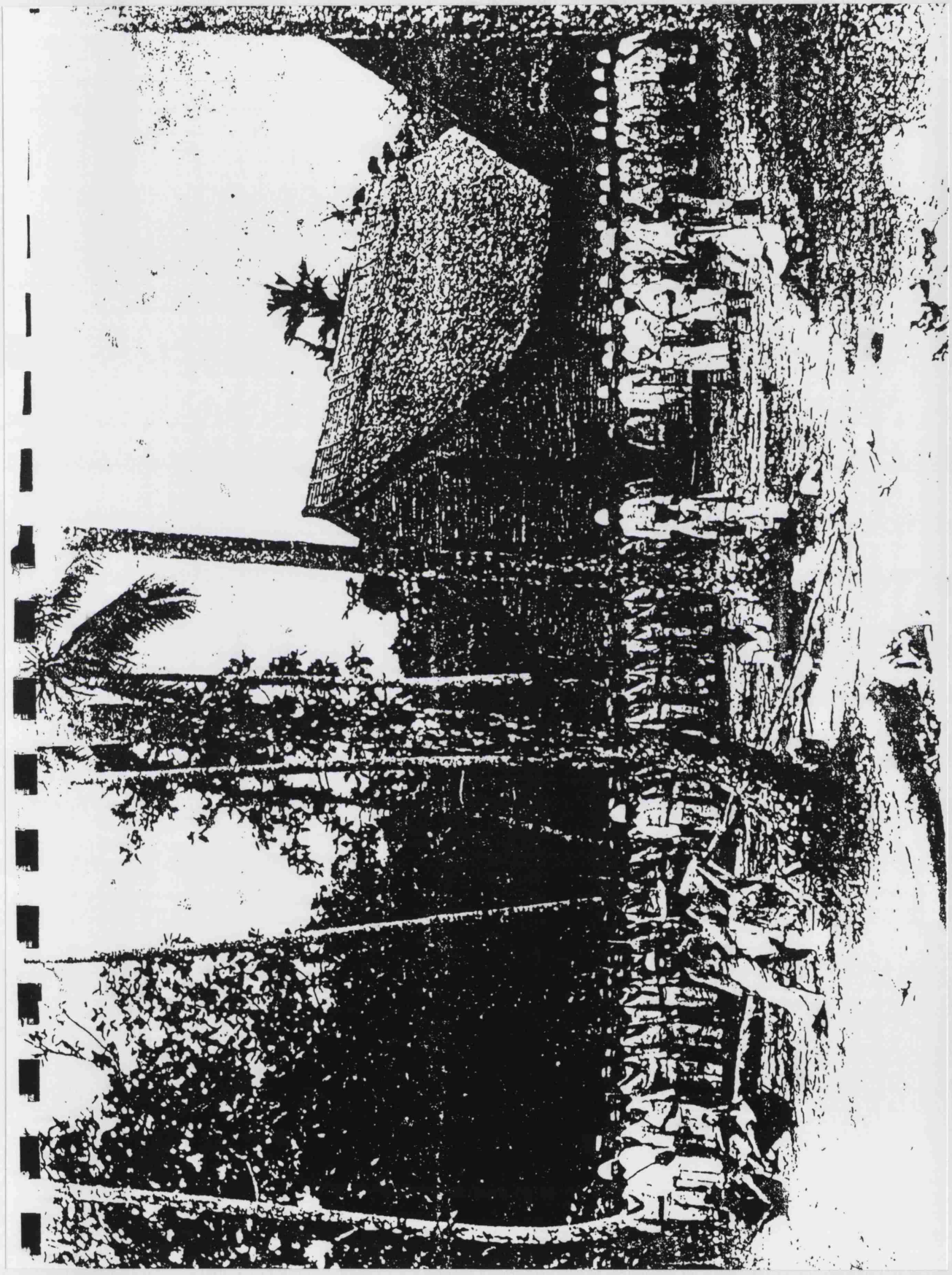

Plate 97 Faletau's photocopy.

The event itself is frequently referred to in general discussions about history and contemporary change in Roviana, and is often used in comparisons between past and present. Unlike the arrival of the Methodist Mission in Roviana on 23 May 1902, a date which local Methodists know and celebrate annually, the event in question here is located in broader terms - "at the time of Royalist" - rather than with any knowledge of, or reference to, a specific date. If people do place it in any chronology it is said to have happened "*bifo lotu*" – before the arrival of the mission. The latter event is used as a kind of temporal pivot; people talk about the time "before the mission", and that "behind (after) the mission".[3] Although people do refer to the changes wrought by the Royalist event, it is not used as a marker of 'before' and 'after' in the same way. During 2000-2001 many conversations and oral accounts - both those responses instigated by my questions, and those I overheard - that commented on the event, did so by making references to the violence, civil unrest and general disruption caused by the 'ethnic tensions' that have affected the Solomon Islands from 1999 onwards. The emphasis was less on the event as signalling a major change of epoch, and more on its relation to current concerns. Why is this image of colonial force in the past seen to say something about contemporary problems?

Faletau had decided to show me the photocopy since I had expressed interest at an earlier passing allusion he made to "Royalist" when we were talking casually about how the 'ethnic tension' in Honiara and elsewhere on Guadalcanal was affecting life in Munda. This brief comment, which links events in Roviana more than 100 years ago to those in the capital Honiara today, and also to events further afield both historically and geographically, was typical of the way in which "the time of Royalist" often slipped into normal conversation;

> "The situation now is very bad. It cannot be solved until it all comes out [until events have run their course]. People will be killed. We have a mafia system In Honiara now. It would be better if we went back to a colonial government. The

[3] In pijin the phrases *bifo lotu* and *bihaen lotu* are used to indicate broad historical epochs; particularly the former which is the ubiquitous phrase to historically locate all sorts of events and artefacts.

> Solomons is like Croatia, everybody fights each other. Young people are against custom and they have crazy hearts. That is why they drink and fight and steal. It is like the time of Royalist. They came and destroyed everything. Everything will change."[4]

This kind of brief passing reference to the Royalist event - the detritus of history, like the photocopy itself - nevertheless demonstrates its contemporary significance as a means of linking the past and the present. The reference to Croatia comes from the way in which roadblocks manned by armed members of the Malaitan Eagle Force in Honiara were known by names like "Croatia", "Vietnam"... These, and other conflicts, some of which feature in videos available in Honiara and to a lesser extent Roviana, as well as in the media more generally (conflicts like the Palestinian intifada, Northern Ireland, the Balkans are reported in the Solomon Star), were frequently referred to in relation to the ethnic tensions. Although during my time in Roviana "Royalist" was on occasions the subject of extended oral narratives - particular performances of history[5] - it was also a feature of normal conversations. This marked a significant change compared to my first visit to Roviana in 1997 when, although people could recount stories about Royalist when asked, they did not relate them to the present day. Since at this point the ethnic tension had yet to make its influence felt there was, perhaps, little need for "the time of Royalist" to serve as a point of reference for current events.

This act of colonial violence is discussed in relation to the present, and is seen to mark, or be indicative of, a period of change and upheaval. In order to understand the image, its relation to history, and its significance for Roviana people, Euro-American expectations are that we need to fix it chronologically. This is how photographs and history are linked in most Euro-American discourses. The necessary 'forensic'[6] work is done to uncover the history 'behind', or 'in' the photograph; archives and collections are consulted, and the photograph has a text attached to it that allows us to understand its historical place and importance. This is a Euro-American historical expectation of the photograph.

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[4] Faletau Leve, Dunde 4.11.2000
[5] See White 1991a

John Tagg referred to late 19th century photographs in Europe as "'paltry paper signs' that are yet the very stuff of history - as though it were physically scored into their surface"[7]. How can this fragile object support the weight of Faletau's "important history"? What does it "keep" for him? The event represented in this much-handled photocopy has a continuing significance for Faletau, and tracing the histories that circulate around it reveals Roviana and Euro-American expectations of photography in relation to understandings of the past and the present.

Case No. 32

> "20th June 1889, on an island near Rubiana Island (New Georgia Island). Death, at the hands of natives, of Mr. William Dabelle, a trader, and two native boys, in the employ of Mr. Edmunds, a trader."

This is how one of the archival traces left by the Royalist incident begins; the written report in the Admiralty records. I have constructed the following account of the actions carried out by the men of HMS Royalist in Roviana lagoon, and the events leading up to it, from the official reports and letters that can be found in the Royal Navy records housed in the National Library of Australia and also in the Public Records Office in London.[8] This history is one that comes from the 'printed papers'. It is only one of the histories that revolve around Faletau's photocopy. As Greg Dening points out the relations between history and the contexts of its preservation are in one sense the 'text' that has to be dealt with, and the 'side' from which this history is written must remain clear.[9]

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[6] Edwards 2001
[7] Tagg 1988 p.7
[8] UK RNAS 23
[9] Dening 1988 p.26.

The events referred to as "the time of Royalist" took place in a period when relations between Roviana people and Europeans had shifted from relatively few sporadic contacts to more sustained and often permanent interaction.[10] As a result of a series of 'outrages' against traders, some of whom were now settled in various locations around the Solomon Islands, and attacks on their employees and vessels, the Royal Navy's Australian Squadron had begun to expand its activities in the islands during the 1870's. But despite the fact that between 1867 and 1879 thirty-four Europeans, and thirty-five islanders employed by Europeans were killed, along with £24,000 of property reported as lost, only one such incident was reported in the western Solomons.[11]

The trading vessel Marion Rennie was attacked off the coast of Rendova island in 1867 and, in a pattern which was later to become common Royal Navy practice in the western Solomons, a full year after the attack in 1868, HMS Blanche, under the command of Captain John Montgomerie, shelled the islands of Roviana lagoon.[12] Although the organiser of the attack on the Marion Rennie was, according to the Admiralty reports, Londo, a *banara* from Rendova, the decision was made to attack villages in Roviana and, failing to apprehend Londo, Montgomerie imposed a fine of three tons of tortoise shell on him in his absence - a huge fine that was clearly impossible to actually pay. In August 1872 HMS Blanche returned under the command of Captain Simpson who recognised the absurdity of the fine imposed by Montgomerie and in its place arranged a 'treaty' between himself and the 'chiefs' Izomo and Mbitia from Munda that required them to deliver Londo or kill him themselves. Montgomerie threatened to destroy their villages if they failed to comply, and they reportedly killed Londo within a month.[13] The Marion Rennie incident and the various punitive measures taken by the British reveal the lack of any coherent official stance on dealing with 'outrages' against European (primarily British) interests. Subsequent to Simpson's actions, Crown lawyers informed the Royal Navy that the process of signing 'treaties' was illegal and that its officers should refrain

[10] See also Chapter 1
[11] Jackson 1978 p.76
[12] ibid p.76-77
[13] ibid p.77

from entering into such agreements.[14] The case also shows that long intervals could occur between events and subsequent policing actions carried out by the Royal Navy. The British avoided the wet season in the western Solomons, called *peza* in Roviana, that lasted from January to March.

In 1877 the first High Commissioner of the Western Pacific, Sir Arthur Gordon had intended to stop Royal Navy commanders making their own arrangements to deal with 'outrages'. But by 1881 conditions had largely reverted to their pre-High Commission state and Royal Navy commanders were instructed to deal with incidents on the basis of their own judgement, and were not required to refer matters to the High Commission first.[15] Commanders were effectively appointed as Deputy Commissioners in order to deal with offences committed by British subjects, but violent offences committed by islanders were to be taken as 'acts of war', and were to be responded to accordingly.[16]

Although villages could easily be shelled from the safety of Royal Navy warships creating a spectacular display, the best method of inflicting real and lasting damage was to send a landing party to burn houses and chop down coconut trees. Since the trees took six years to reach maturity and bear fruit, their destruction was a severe blow at a time when most trade was rapidly shifting to copra. But the Royal Navy were also obliged to protect the interests of traders and were under instructions to avoid the wholesale destruction of plantations.[17] The other great loss that could be inflicted on Roviana people was the destruction of their large trading and raiding canoes -*tomoko*. These represented a significant material and spiritual investment, the loss of which restricted the efficacy of local *banara* and polities.[18] After the shelling by the Navy in 1868 it was another twenty years before a similar incident reportedly took place in Roviana, despite the arrival of one or two Europeans who began to set up permanent trading posts in the lagoon.

[14] UK RNAS 13 Lushington to Stirling August 1873
[15] Scarr 1967 p.36-51
[16] ibid.
[17] Jackson 1978 p.99
[18] The attacks were to a large extent ineffective at reducing the scale of headhunting. See Zelenietz 1979, McKinnon 1975, Aswani 2000

Throughout the 1870's Royal Navy ships frequently called at Roviana, mostly Nusa Zonga, a small island off Munda (see Plate 3), to gather information from traders and to recruit interpreters and guides. The quality of this information was often dubious. For example, during this period an islander called Mengo frequently helped the Navy and was considered by the British to be a prominent 'Rubiana chief', but as Jackson points out he was actually from Gizo and had been forced to abandon that island, along with the rest of its population, due to large-scale head-hunting raids carried out by Roviana people.[19] He would certainly have had his own agenda in terms of local politics. Nusa Zonga was also a coal depot for Royal Navy ships and a point where they could pick up Navy orders conveyed by trading vessels plying their trade between northern Queensland and the Solomons. For information about events in Roviana, the captains of Royal Navy ships were totally dependent on traders and local *banara*, particularly Inqava who could speak pijin English well and gradually acquired a reputation as the "king of Rubiana".

The first European trader to regularly visit Roviana was Alexander Ferguson who had a large trading station on Nusa Zonga and worked for Cowlishaw Brothers of Sydney.[20] The station was occupied by another Cowlishaw employee, Stephens, in the mid-1870s, but Ferguson visited regularly and acted as an interpreter and adviser to the British during the Marion Rennie affair.[21] He recommended that Izomo and Mbitia be given rifles as a reward for killing Londo.[22] Ferguson was killed in Bougainville in 1880 and the Cowlishaw Brothers interests were bought by T.G.Kelly and J.Williams of Sydney and, along with their representative Captain Thomas Woodhouse, they bought Nusa Zonga in October 1881 for £7 from 'Condo', the sale was witnessed by two *banara*, Mengo and Inqava.[23] Another trader, Frank Wickham, bought Hombupeka island just off Munda around 1875, and Edmund Pratt bought nearby Hombuhombu island in 1886, although for Roviana people there was and is a great deal of uncertainty about the legitimacy of the latter purchase.

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[19] Jackson 1978 p.95
[20] ibid p.80
[21] Ferguson had been on the Marion Rennie but was dropped off on Makira before the schooner proceeded to Rendova. See Ferguson's obituary in the Sydney Mail 25 September 1880
[22] Jackson 1978 p.80
[23] ibid p.81

Although relations between Roviana people and traders who had settled there were a potential source of arguments, Jackson suggests that there were relatively few violent incidents in the 1870's because it was a period when the copra trade was blossoming.[24] Roviana people were to a large extent able to dictate the process of trade,[25] and increasingly demanded rifles, as well as the more acceptable axe blades, in return for copra, and despite being illegal under Queens Regulation No.1 of 1884, traders such as Pratt had a reputation for dealing them.[26] Outside of the changes caused by trade, the traders themselves, almost all of whom married local women, were figures of some influence and power, able to act as middle-men in the flow of European commodities. They participated in local networks of exchange and generosity. Woodford spent several weeks in Munda in 1886, and complained that headhunting, ritual sacrifice, and cannibalism were regularly being practised in the presence of Europeans.[27] He thought the people at Munda were "a most treacherous lot".[28] Although only eleven Europeans were killed in the western Solomons between 1880 and 1896 the consequences of these 'outrages' had a significant effect on the lives of Roviana people.[29]

The Royalist incident was a punitive action carried out in retaliation for two attacks on Edmund Pratt's trading station at Hombuhombu. A raid in October 1888 resulted in the death of two islander employees and the loss of £200 worth of goods.[30] The islanders working for European traders in the western Solomons were usually from elsewhere in the group, often Malaita. Roviana people were particularly averse to working for Europeans at this stage, and islander employees were outsiders who may well have been considered easier targets for local people as they had no relatives nearby who might avenge the death or demand compensation. In the first attack on Pratt's station the killers came from Simbo, and they may have had a personal reason for the attack having been

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[24] ibid p.82
[25] See Chapter 1
[26] Jackson 1978 p.83
[27] Woodford Papers No.30 diary entry for 1 September 1886
[28] ibid 28 September
[29] Bennett 1986 p. 395-397
[30] Jackson 1978 p.83

mistreated by Pratt in the past. Pratt wrote a letter concerning this attack to the Sydney Morning Herald that was published on 29 March 1889;

"ATROCITIES AT RUBIANA

Sir, The following is a very brief account of a double murder, accompanied with robbery, committed by natives at my station situated at Rubiana, Solomon Group. On the 19th August last I left here to proceed to Sydney to purchase a vessel to continue my business as trader in and amongst the Solomon Islands. During my absence, or to be more explicit, two months after I had left here, two natives from Simbo or Eddystone Island came to my place and killed two of my labouring boys, whom I had left, together with two more and my family, to watch and guard the place. They actually succeeded in killing the boys, and afterwards left.

A fortnight afterwards the Banietta [Baniata on Rendova] natives called, and broke into my store and stole therefrom goods to the value of £200; in fact all they could carry in their canoes. Three weeks after, the Rubiana natives called and broke open the dwelling- house, and took therefrom all the furniture &c, including partitions, doors, windows, and left nothing standing but the walls. They also went over the cultivated ground and rooted up everything, and left it exposed to rot; in fact, what they could not take they destroyed.

Rubiana natives are certainly getting more and more forward and cheeky every day. Fifteen years ago they took the "Marian Renny" [sic] schooner, killed and ate the whole of the crew.

In January 1885, Captain Howie [of the Elibank Castle] and his boat's crew were killed and eaten at Banietta [Rendova]. Those natives are now living at Rubiana. About twelve years ago the "Speranza" [Esperanza] schooner was taken and the crew killed and eaten by Simbo natives. Some Rubiana natives were implicated in that also. Lately again, the "Prospect" cutter was taken, and the crew killed and eaten at Dogbly, Piandova Islands, by Rubiana natives; and in all the above cases H.M. ships have been very lenient towards the natives. Sir, it is the opinion of all the traders right throughout the group that an example ought to be shown these natives, especially around this part of the group, where the inactivity of H.M. ships

is very keenly felt. The cutting of their fruit-trees or destroying their canoes, which was done in all the abovementioned cases, does not seem to affect them in the least. They, on the contrary, are boasting they will kill the next man-of-war (to use their own phrase).

As no others but English subjects, and no other but English capital is invested in these islands, surely I say we are but very imperfectly protected.

I have calculated my loss at from £400 to £500 pounds sterling. It is hoped here by all traders, and also by some friendly natives, that on this occasion H.M. ships will give these Rubiana natives a prompt and decisive lesson; and it is my firm opinion that if this were done nothing need be apprehended from them, if not for ever, at least for some years to come. Trusting that you will permit the above to appear in your most valuable columns. I am &c Pratts Edmunds."

The letter elicted an official response from Captain George Hand to his Commander in Chief. Hand reported that Captain Woodhouse (from Nusa Zonga) had informed him that the killings were carried out by people from Simbo who had been in Pratt's employ and that he had previously attacked them. Hand apparently asked Pratt to go with him in HMS Royalist to identify the men involved, but Pratt declined saying it would "injure his trade", but gave the names of the two killers as "Meea and Woo-Koo", the former had a Roviana wife.[31] Pratt was known by various names and had a reputation, amongst Roviana people and the Royal Navy, for violence and mistreating his employees, as well as trading in firearms.[32] Pratt's station was attacked again on 20 June 1889 and two islander employees and one European working for Pratt, William Dabelle[33], were killed and their heads taken. The second attack, referred to in the official correspondence as "Case No.32"[34], was, after enquiries carried out by Captain Hand, understood to have

[31] UK RNAS 23 p.22

[32] Bennett 1986 p.76 He was finally found guilty of the trading in firearms by Woodford after the declaration of the Protectorate and was heavily fined.

[33] William Dabelle's brother Tom had been murdered on Yanuta Island, west of San Cristoval on 26th March 1889 (UKRNAS 23 p.2)

[34] UKRNAS 23 p.1

been carried out by "renegades" from Mbilua (Vella Lavella) reported as "Goolie, Simbah, Garnil, Goroomoo, and Rine".[35]

In September 1889 Captain Hand aboard HMS Royalist went to Simbo to search for Woo-Koo and Meea. When they were not surrendered he shelled the canoe-houses, canoes and several houses at "Narovo". In December 1889 C.T.Scott, the Commander-in-Chief to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific promised that "next season" the Senior Officer of the Northern Division would be instructed to pursue the capture of those responsible for the murders of Pratt's employees in October (the first attack), and this was supported by the High Commissioner, Sir J.B.Thurston.[36]

The following year, 1890, Captain Harry Grenfell aboard HMS Cordelia visited Simbo in July to search for Woo-Koo and Meea and was told that the former had died but that Meea was now living at "Rubiana".[37] Grenfell left Simbo and sailed for Roviana, taking with him "Johnnie (Minjew)" as an interpreter and someone who knew Meea. On the way he spoke to Captain Woodhouse on Nusa Zonga and was told that Pratt was away for a month collecting copra. He was also told that Lokokongo (Rendova island), which had been shelled by HMS Royalist in 1889 as a reprisal for the murder of a European, Carl Neilson, and two islander employees (Case No.34), had not suffered much damage and had a canoe-house with Neilson's head in it. Grenfell left Nusa Zonga with Woodhouse and Inqava for Lokokongo to "obtain that head and give them a lesson".[38] The British were as concerned with recovering the heads of murdered Europeans and islanders, as Roviana people were with taking heads in headhunting raids. The emphasis in Royal Navy accounts is on the "savagery" of headhunting and their concern for a Christian burial for the European remains. But their concerns may have been read very differently by Roviana people. British involvement in the pursuit of heads may have been perceived locally as some kind of aberrant form of ancestor worship - it certainly would have been understandable as such within a framework of Roviana beliefs. At Lokokongo, Grenfell

[35] ibid p.3
[36] ibid p.23
[37] ibid p.5
[38] ibid p.5

"gave them to understand that I insisted on the immediate delivery of the white man's skull, and also the skulls of his two native companions whom they had murdered last year."[39] The three skulls were handed over on the beach and Grenfell then proceeded to burn houses near the beach, and when a large group of armed men assembled he fired several shells to "disperse" them.

Grenfell returned to Nusa Zonga and called a meeting of Roviana *banara* including Inqava.[40] He was told that Woo-Koo and Meea were both still alive and living on Simbo with a *banara* called "Laitee". According to the assembled *banara*, Pratt had previously shot a native on Vella Lavella.[41] In addition, some time before the murder of Dabelle and the two islander employees took place, Pratt had visited Mbilua (Vella Lavella) - he owned an island and trading station near the village [was he moving from here to Hombuhombu? This may have been another factor in the raid?] - to get some copra he was owed. He neither got his copra, nor saw the *banara* he had been dealing with, so he broke in the side of the latter's *tomoko*. Grenfell was convinced that the murders were in direct retaliation for this act, and he was ordered to reprimand Pratt for "his illegal and most reprehensible conduct" and to bind him over "in a considerable sum to keep the peace, and be of good behaviour for a specified period – say twelve months."[42]

Grenfell was apparently a photographer, and while at Nusa Zonga he used his camera to very specific ends;

> "Having heard that two slave girls were going to be sacrificed because their owners wife had died (this being the custom), I had the girls brought in after much trouble and delay, and found the owner did not want to kill them, but that the other men of the tribe insisted on it. I got the five kings together again, and told them that they were not to allow it, and that I held them all responsible if it was done; and that the two girls were to be brought every six moons to Nususongo for verification by

[39] ibid p.6
[40] ibid
[41] ibid
[42] ibid p.3

> Captain Woodhouse. I then photographed the girls and told them there could be no mistake about it, and photographed the kings as well. They declared that the girls should be "tamboo" which, I hope, may make them safe."[43]

There seem to have been no official guidelines or requirements for captains of Royal Navy ships regularly patrolling the Solomon Islands to take photographs, and those that were taken were a result of the interests of officers, although some did find their way into the official records.

Returning to Simbo Harbour later in July, Grenfell, failing to contact *banara* Laitee, shelled his village. He told the *banara* he did contact that this would be done every time a Royal Navy ship came until Laitee gave up the two wanted men, Woo-koo and Meea. Grenfell then left for the Treasury Islands and on 18 July, he threw overboard the weapons he had confiscated on Simbo, and at "lat.9 29 S lon.153 26 E on Dinner Island" he buried the European and islander employee skulls he had recovered from Lokokongo.[44] Grenfell caught up with Pratt in August 1890 at Nusa Zonga and "bound him over in the sum of £200 to keep the peace for twelve calendar months".[45] However, the Navy were still keen to pursue the killers of Dabelle and the two islander employees.

Beaches Littered with Skulls

On 15 August 1891 Captain Edward H.M.Davis in command of HMS Royalist anchored at Hathorn Sound and proceeded to Nusa Zonga by boat. He found Mr. Atkinson in charge, Captain Woodhouse having gone to Sydney to deliver a load of copra. Atkinson reported that four of Woodhouse's islander employees had been murdered at Ndovele (Vella Lavella). Davis agreed to look into the matter as he was on his way to Mbilua (Vella Lavella) to apprehend Goolie, Simbah, Garnil, Goroomoo, and Rine, the killers of Dabelle and the two islander employees. He anchored off Ndovele on 17 August and sent

[43] ibid p.6
[44] ibid p.7

a message to *banara* Tono to deliver the killers. On the 18, Tono not having responded, Davis landed with twenty-five men and proceeded into the bush to Ndovele and destroyed it. He then proceeded to Mbilua and took on board - although exactly how this was achieved is unclear - "Tooloo, the chief, and two other natives of that place until the murderers of Dabelle (case 32) are delivered up."[46] The taking of hostages was a recognised Royal Navy practice.

After a brief return visit to Nusa Zonga to refuel with coal, Davis was back at Mbilua on the 20 August and again sent demands for the killers of Woodhouse's employees to be handed over. He was met with a series of excuses, but did manage to locate and have brought on board a woman who;

> "is the only witness to the murder [of Dabelle and the two islander employees at Pratt's station], and can give me valuable information about the murderers - whom she states have been in Beloa [Mbilua] since the night of the murder."[47]

Davis left threatening to "make war on the whole of [Mbilua]" if those wanted for the various killings were not surrendered on his next visit. The woman was called "Rowkena" and came from Malaita, and was eventually returned there by Davis in October 1891.[48] Davis got the following information from Rowkena;

> "I ascertained that she was the only living witness to the murders. It was dark at the time, and she could not see which of the five men beforenamed actually killed Dabelle. 'They all did it'. She said two of the men held one of the Malaita boys, whilst Simbah killed him. Simbah was a youth, the son of Goolie, and had never before killed a man. After the murders they took her away with them, stayed some days at Rubiana, and then went to Beloa [Mbilua], where they have lived ever since. This woman had almost forgotten her own language (she knew no English),

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[45] ibid p.15
[46] ibid p.8
[47] ibid p.8
[48] ibid p.15

and having no trustworthy Beloa interpreter, it was impossible to get much information from her."[49]

In his orders of 25 August 1891 to Lieutenant Commander Bain of HMS Ringdove, one of the other gunboats used by the Royal Navy in the western Solomons, Davis advised that;

> "Tooloo,the chief of Beloa [Mbilua], says Dabelle's murderers - Goolie, Simbah, Resso, Gani, and Dui [note that some of the names of those accused have now changed] are not in [Mbilua], but are in Rubiana now. I believe Ingova, Chief of Rubiana, is absent, but you may get the necessary information from Wangi [Wonge]. (Mr. Atkinson, in charge of Woodhouse's station at Nososongo [Nusa Zonga] will get him for you). If these men are in Rubiana use your best endeavours to get them. If you get them, proceed to [Mbilua] and land Tooloo and the native with him. If these men are not in Rubiana, go to [Mbilua] and demand them, and if you see no reasonable chance of obtaining them in twenty four hours, tell them I will make war on them on my return; of course keeping Tooloo on board. Take from Rubiana as interpreters Mamibulli and Towrow."[50]

Bain visited Nusa Zonga on 29 August where Wonge told him that Dabelle's murderers were not in Roviana but that Goolie had been there eight days before to collect his belongings and had then left. Bain then proceeded to Mbilua and after landing met a party of thirty or forty armed men. He demanded the killers but was told that they had left after the last visit of HMS Royalist. Local people were concerned about *banara* Tooloo "[s]ince Tooloo he go, all man he too plenty much cry".[51] The next day Bain returned and found three large groups of armed men on the beach, since they did not have the accused with them, and possibly fearing a serious confrontation, Bain left.

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[49] ibid p.20
[50] ibid p.9
[51] ibid

In his reports to his Commander-in-Chief (Sir J.B.Thurston) Davis wrote that HMS Royalist anchored at Hathorn Sound at 7.45am on the 24 September. Davis then proceeded with thirty armed men in boats to Nusa Zonga where he "ascertains" - although the source of this information is not clear - that the five men wanted for Dabelle's murder, and two men who had previously murdered two natives from the British schooner Marshall S, were in "Rubiana".[52]

While at Nusa Zonga, Davis sent for Wonge, but he refused to comply and Inqava was apparently away fishing. Davis then sent a message back to HMS Royalist to order Lieutenant Luscombe to bring all the "small-arms men and marines" to Nusa Roviana at daylight the following morning. Then, having assembled many local *banara* on Nusa Zonga, Davis warned "all the villages in the vicinity" that they should give up the killers or he would "make war against all the villages in the district". In the evening Davis went to "Cocorappa" (Kokorapa) on "Rubiana Island" (Nusa Roviana) and told the villagers that he and a small contingent of marines were going to camp there for the night. He repeated his warning that "if the seven murderers, whom they were harbouring, were not given up by the following morning, I should make war against all the villages."[53]

Luscombe arrived at Nusa Roviana at 8am on the 25 September with all the ships men (80 in total) and, since there was no sign of the murderers by 10am, Davis and his men "proceeded to destroy all the villages on and near Rubiana". That night Davis, perhaps feeling it unwise to stay on Nusa Roviana, camped at Inqava's village (Sisiata) and on the 26 September proceeded with the destruction of villages along the shoreline at Munda. Due to the long-standing relation between Inqava and the British he left the formers' two canoe sheds and own house intact, "in hopes that, on his return from his fishing

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[52] ibid p.11 The Marshall S was attacked in Roviana in May 1891 and two Savo members of its crew were killed. One of the killers, Buko, was caught and flogged. This was a contributing factor to the decision to attack Roviana. See Bennett 1986 Appendix 6 p.395 The term 'Rubiana' was used in at least two ways in British accounts of the area; to refer to Roviana lagoon generally, but also to refer specifically to the island of Nusa Roviana. It is sometimes unclear in which sense it is being used.

[53] ibid p.11 Tooloo, who had been kept as a hand-cuffed hostage since August to identify the murderers, escaped during the night (of 25-26) and went alongside the English schooner, Saucy Lass (a ship belonging to the European trader Frank Wickham), with the hope of getting his handcuffs filed off, but Wickham returned him to Davis at Nusa Zonga later the following day.

expedition, he would endeavour to have the men given up". By 3pm Davis had stopped burning villages in the Munda area and returned to Nusa Zonga. He left there with his men to rejoin HMS Royalist in Hathorn Sound at 4pm.

Davis wrote of the attack;

> "In all I estimate 400 houses, 150 canoes, and 1,000 heads were destroyed. In one house I found twenty-four heads ranged along one side, but it was too dark to see the rest of the house. In Goolie's house [presumably his *paele* as this is where heads would have been kept], the chief who murdered Dabelle, I found several guns, spears etc. and from ten to fifteen heads. The big war canoes had been removed into the shallow lagoons, where, with the small force at my disposal, it was quite impossible to get at them, but this severe punishment will not be lost on the noted Rubiana head-hunters, who for years have considered themselves safe in their strongholds."[54]

In 1893-4, Henry Somerville recorded that Roviana people saw the beaches of the lagoon "absolutely littered" with smashed skulls.[55] Davis returned to Nusa Zonga on 11 October and;

> "ascertained that my action of 25 and 26 September had had a great effect on the natives of Rubiana and Munda, and that there was some talk amongst them of delivering up some of the murderers. They were anxious to know what I intended to do, and I sent word to them that if they gave up the murderers I would do no more, but if they persisted in keeping them I should continue to make war on them."[56]

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[54] ibid p.12 Having wrought so much destruction in Roviana, Davis proceeded to San Cristoval island where he executed a local man called Taiemi, "having previously satisfied myself as to his guilt, from the evidence of natives who witnessed the murder, and he himself having confessed to the crime. I shot him on the same spot he murdered Craig in January last, in the presence of Chief Wasinghow and other natives"(ibid p.13). There is a photograph of the moment before this execution in the Fiji Museum. Here state terror and photography come together.

[55] Somerville 1897 p.399

[56] ibid.

The Sydney Morning Herald echoed Davis' sentiments; "it is to be hoped that these savages, the noted Rubiana head-hunters, who have depopulated all the surrounding islands by their cruel practices, will not soon forget their well-merited punishment."[57] The attack has some longterm effects, at least according to European observers. When the Royal Navy returned to Roviana in 1892 the islanders asked if they could now re-build their houses,[58] and several years later in 1895, Commander Rason reported that HMS Royalist is "a name to conjure by, owing to the strong action of Captain Davis, and his name is still respected throughout the group".[59] George Brown visited Roviana in August 1899 and commented that "many of the villages in that part were destroyed some years ago by H.M.S. Royalist, for some outrages committed against white men and they do not yet appear to have recovered."[60] He noticed a significant decrease in the population compared to his previous visit 20 years earlier and, when visiting some religious sites, declared that, "the best of these had been destroyed by the ship of war, some years ago".[61] In his account of Roviana in 'The Savage South Seas', Elkington wrote about Inqava's *paele*;

> "Fifteen years or more ago, old Ingova, the notorious head-hunting chief of Rubiana lagoon, was about at the height of his power, and his raids of slaughter to neighbouring islands were of dreadful frequency. It was to this canoe house that he returned after a successful expedition in his great TOMAKO (war canoes) laden with ghastly trophies, but ever since Rear-Admiral Davis, then of H.M.S.Royalist, sacked this place in 1891, all has been comparatively quiet, though I did hear, while I was there, that Ingova had led a head-hunting raid or two."[62]

> "One day, soon after one of Ingova's rash ventures amongst white men, Commander...Davis played havoc with his village, burning and sacking it. It was no ordinary attack but a clean sweep he made of Rubiana, and then the shore was

[57] Sydney Morning Herald 10 December 1891 p.4
[58] UK RNAS 23 1892 p.12
[59] Jackson 1978 p.102
[60] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Nov. 6 1899 p.2.
[61] ibid p.3.
[62] Elkington 1907 p.90

littered with Ingova's skulls: skulls that he and his fathers had collected for generations were scattered in all directions, and lay bleaching on the beach, some half burnt and others cracked and broken."[63] (p.99)

As well as burning canoe-houses (*paele*) and smashing the skulls of victims from headhunting raids which would have been hung up inside them and inside ritual war-houses, *zelepade*, Davis also destroyed ancestral skull shrines (*hope*). However, he took away with him at least one intact skull-house which is now in the British Museum in London.[64] Woodford commented on a series of "funerary ornaments" that had appeared as illustrations in an article by Edge-Partington and Joyce in the journal Man in 1904;

"at the time I received the magazine I happened to be on a short official visit to Gizo, and as Ingava, the chief of Rubiana mentioned in the article, happened to be in the neighbourhood, I sent for him and showed him the plate. The old man was delighted and recognised every article illustrated. He told me that Figs. 1-5 were taken away by Captain, now Rear-Admiral Davis, from the natives of the village of Kolokongo at the time he visited Rubiana in 1891, and that the "bakeha" illustrated in Fig.6 was presented to Captain Davis by himself."[65]

Davis took a number of artefacts which are now in the collections of the Auckland Museum, the British Museum and the Rautenstrauch Joest Museum in Germany. Elkington reported that; "[Inqava] wears no necklace round his neck now, for Admiral Davis has it, it having been given him by Ingova many years after that little visit as a kind of peace offering".[66] In desecrating shrines and taking away ancestral skulls as well as those belonging to the victims of headhunting raids, Davis made a direct assault on Roviana history, denying people access to their ancestral power and efficacy.[67] In one sense it was a visual assault on Roviana history - the beaches littered with skulls. The

[63] ibid p.99
[64] BM Ethno 1894-188
[65] Woodford 1905 p.38
[66] Elkington 1907 p.100

photograph of Inqava in Edge-Partington's obituary for him published in the anthropological journal Man, was reproduced from a copy in Davis' possession.[68] Davis also took a food trough from Kaliqogo on Nusa Roviana. These were usually kept in a *paele* and used for ritual feasts, and this is now the only surviving example of a whole Roviana trough in existence.[69]

Although, the destruction wrought by the men of HMS Royalist also had long-term effects in the sense of causing the relocation of people, in other respects it was ineffectual. Although the British officially recorded the attack as a 'punitive action' for the murder of Dabelle and others, it is likely that it was also an attempt at the suppression of headhunting and the reduction of local resistance prior to the establishment of the British Protectorate in 1893.[70] As an attempt at 'pacification' its impact was minimal, it failed to destroy many *tomoko* and for a headhunting raid on Choiseul in 1894, Inqava allegedly mustered 500 men and 22 *tomoko* from his and another chiefs resources, and with help from traders he was able to use two English boats, 300-400 rifles and 5000 rounds of ammunition.[71] In 1894, a year after the declaration of the British Protectorate, traders complained that people on the western Solomons were too busy either headhunting, or dealing with its consequences, to gather copra and as a result the trade was suffering.[72] The actions of Royalist certainly had an effect on Inqava's relative local position, improving his situation in both economic and political terms. The destruction wrought to others left him in a favourable position in terms of ancestral efficacy, and the increased reliance of the British on him as a middle-man - reinforcing his image as the 'king' of Roviana to outsiders - meant that he was able to enlarge his standing locally through increased access to trade and influence.[73]

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[67] Keesing describes how the Malaitan police involved in the punitive raids after the Bell massacre desecrating ancestral shrines in order to systematically destroy other Malaitans' relationships with their ancestors (1990 p.282)
[68] Edge-Partington 1907 p.22
[69] Edge-Partington 1906 p.21 See also Waite 2000
[70] Zelenietz 1979, McKinnon 1975, Aswani 2000
[71] Bennett 1986 p.91
[72] Sydney Morning Herald 11 June 1894
[73] There are many other *banara* who are of equal, or more, importance to Roviana people historically.

Davis went on to pursue Dabelle's killers and in October 1891 he and his men attacked a heavily defended stockade at "Jukataboki" on Mbilua killing "chief Vambui the brother of Dui, one of the murderers" and burning houses, although he did not have time to destroy the stockade. He also destroyed two canoes "one being of Rubiana build, was probably the one in which Dui and Resso [two of Dabelle's killers] had returned to [Mbilua]".[74] He also destroyed Goolie's village at Barrecoma on Mbilua, although it had been deserted for some time.[75] Davis finally met Inqava at Nusa Zonga on 26 October, the latter having returned from fishing, and Inqava told him that;

> "Goolie and some of the murderers were at Rendova, but kept moving about, and could not be caught. He promised to try and capture Goolie, and any of them, should they come near his village; and said that probably they would all be killed for bringing trouble on the villages of Rubiana and Munda."[76]

Pratt was involved in a land dispute with Inqava in 1893, the latter having made a complaint to the British authorities. Inqava won his case through the British legal system.[77] Pratt later moved to Simbo, but with the increasing scrutiny of his activities by the colonial authorities as a result of the protectorate being declared, he eventually left his family in the Solomons in 1901, and returned alone to Sydney.

Other Histories

The preceding account of the Royalist incident, pieced together from the 'printed papers' constructs a narrative chain of events and dates. It fixes a chronological sequence in a style that fulfils European/North American genre expectations of a history that is 'behind' the photograph. But is this a history within which the photocopy kept in Faletau's briefcase is embedded? What relevance does this history have for Faletau? The context

[74] UK RNAS 23 p.13
[75] ibid p.21
[76] ibid p.21
[77] See Chapter 1

that leaves its mark on the history I have written is, as Dening suggests, the archive; this is an archival history.[78] The act of inscription I have carried out performs a history in which the Royal Navy records are linked to the photograph. The text possesses an authority - all those footnotes giving the exact archival references - but it is an authority of which I am wary. Although individual Roviana people frequently requested that I write down their history, "to make it straight", they were very much aware that history has a "side"; history is constructed from a position, and people have different positions.[79] They are aware of its manipulation by people in order to make themselves "come up", to advance their own position, and having their history committed to paper is one way of enabling this. Many Roviana people thought that the written word possessed more authority than an oral account.

One of my main concerns during the time I spent in Roviana was with the suitability, or not, of photographs as sources for Roviana people to think about their history. Not necessarily to write it down, or even just to encourage formal oral histories to be recounted, but to provoke reminiscences, anecdotes, and personal memories. I was concerned with the detritus of history and the kinds of connections with the present day that Faletau's casual remark establishes. As Klaus Neumann argues the trash of history is; "the bits of the past that cannot possibly be used to support the notion that the past leads inevitably to the present or that the present could be deduced from the past".[80] This detritus is composed of instants, of "images flitting past". I want to understand Roviana historical expectations of photography. How does any archival history, such as that I have constructed, impact on Roviana people?

There is a sense in which the detail I have striven to provide in the archival history is irrelevant for contemporary Roviana people. They do not care for exact dates. The details required and expected by Roviana people are of a different order to those required from

[78] Dening 1988 p.26
[79] Similar requests are a feature of relations between anthropologists and Melanesians. See Neumann 1992 p.249
[80] Neumann 2000 p.71

this singular archival history.[81] Anthropological and Euro-American expectations of history suggest that I should look at the oral historical record to see what it can add to the archival one I have constructed. In constructing the history of an attack by Malaitans on a trading vessel in the late 1800's, Keesing asks how reliable and how illuminating oral historical evidence can be; "how can such oral testimony, encrusted by time, compliment the archival records documenting events from a European perspective?"[82] he argues that by using the archives; "we can thus reconstruct what actually happened (albeit from the perspective of the crew of a European ship recruiting indentured labor) a century ago; and we can thus compare this scenario with the perspectives of the indigenous attackers, which have been filtered through oral tradition."[83] It is tempting to combine the two, or more, histories to come up with the complete version - what actually happened - but Roviana people acknowledge that histories are competing accounts constructed in the present with a view to achieving certain ends, of doing certain work. As Elizabeth Edwards argues in relation to photographs and history; "we expect photographs to tell, but find them remarkably resistant, for, like history, they do not lend themselves to being dealt with in any definite way".[84] We are lured into a pattern of expectancy inappropriate to the nature of the medium, which, in its connections with history, is both mutable and shifting.

Although I will look at oral accounts of the Royalist incident, there is a sense in which I am concerned about committing them to paper. Walter Ong talks about "the transient reality of the spoken as against the permanent unreality of the written word,"[85] but even a tape recording would preserve the 'phono-centrism' of a Euro-American approach.[86] For some Pacific historians it is the 'transient reality' of the oral account that needs to be resurrected in contrast to written histories.[87] Photographs seem to hold out the promise of a permanent historical inscription, that such and such an event actually took place, but

[81] See also Aswani 2000 for a discussion of oral history in Roviana.
[82] Keesing 1986 p.269
[83] ibid
[84] Edwards 2001 p.9
[85] Quoted in Neumann 2000 p.66
[86] See Derrida 2002
[87] Neumann 1992

they are also resistant to fixed readings - which makes them particularly good to think about history in Roviana. There is an equation made by many Pacific historians that a people's ability to know their past is a necessary prerequisite to an ability to control their future.[88] Arriving in Roviana with a large number of historical photographs, at a time when there were significant changes occurring, meant that this equation was at the forefront of many discussions about what the photographs meant to Roviana people.

Do we understand Faletau's photocopy any better for knowing this archival history, this chain of events? Or do we find what we already know? As Carlo Ginzburg warns; "the historian reads into them what he has already learned by other means, or what he believes he knows, and wants to demonstrate".[89] Do we find reflected in the image what we expect, the photograph as a document and the performance of a colonial power? Does the archival history then form another 'pacification' of Roviana?[90] What about the possibility of a visual history, a "savage history"[91], or the existence of alternative histories within the photograph? There is an issue here about the containment of history - just as Faletau attempts to "keep everything" in his briefcase, we must distinguish between those histories contained within the frame of the photograph and those that result from the contexts of its use. Before the advent of the written word Roviana history was channelled through mnemonic objects such as shrines, shell valuables and ancestral relics. It was realised in the topography of a religious landscape,[92] and through stories, genealogies and performances. How do historical photographs relate to existing Roviana histories? Edwards has demonstrated how the spaces of colonial photographs contain within them the possibility of other readings; the irruption of a local social space within that inscribed by colonialism.[93] In the case of Faletau's photocopy, does the lack of Roviana people and any kind of indigenous social space in the photograph mean that this particular kind of counter-history is not possible here? What possibilities are there for alternative readings of Faletau's photocopy? Is it important that he keeps it?

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[88] Borofsky et al 2000
[89] Ginzburg 1989 p.35
[90] Aswani 2000
[91] Neumann 2000 p.72
[92] Thomas, Sheppard and Walter 2001
[93] Edwards 2001

Plate 98 Men and officers of HMS Royalist 870140013 Macleay Museum, University of Sydney

Faletau's photocopy - now reproduced here in the form of a copy print from an album in the Macleay Museum, Sydney (Plate 98) - has had a history constructed for it. It can be located, or embedded; laid down like a sediment. We know it was taken on the 25 or the 26 September 1891, and we know what the British officially thought they were doing. The large contingent of British sailors and marines from HMS Royalist stand in ranks in front of two canoe-houses, *paele*, that, from other photographs, can be identified as belonging to Inqava. These buildings, along with Inqava's own house, were the only ones to be left untouched by Captain Davis and his men. The photograph bears the stamp of colonial performance; it seems to perfectly fit those Foucauldian readings of a mutually supportive network connecting power, photography, and the state.[94] It has the feel of a ritual such as those enacted by the commander and crew of HMS Curacao several years later in 1893 when declaring the Solomon Islands a British Protectorate and raising the Union Jack on Nusa Zonga. It is a staged, almost theatrical, event.

The *paele* are at Sisiata, Inqava's land within Munda, and the detail available in the copy-print (a digital scan) from the photograph in the Macleay Museum reveals details of the house on the left. A comparison with other photographs of these two buildings suggests that the *paele* on the left must have been built in the intervening period between a photograph taken by Woodford in 1886,[95] which shows a single canoe-house, and that taken by the photographer from HMS Royalist in 1891.[96] The good condition of the thatch on the building also marks it out as being of relatively recent construction. This demonstrates the active expansion of at least one Roviana polity in the period leading up to the declaration of the British Protectorate in 1893. The building of a second *paele* demonstrates the relative success in economic terms that was being enjoyed by Inqava during this period. When Brown visited Roviana in 1901 to plan the Methodist mission there, he "found the people in a state of great excitement over a large feast which Ingava was about to give to celebrate the opening of a new house which he had just built".[97] So perhaps this *paele* had only been built very recently. This is certainly forensic evidence,

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[94] Tagg 1988
[95] See Woodford 1890 p.159
[96]. See Festetics von Tolna 1903 p.327 for another photograph of the second canoe-house.
[97] Australian Methodist Missionary Review Sept. 9 1901 p.3.

but does the increased legibility of the copy print upgrade its historical potential for Roviana people? Our expectations for photography and history are fulfilled - the detail has been filled in - in the same way that the copy-print is more legible than the photocopy.

In the albums housed in the collections of the Macleay Museum, Sydney and the Fiji Museum there are further photographs of the actions of Davis and his men. One shows a group of sailors, marines and officers about to set light to a simple canoe-shed and several small *tomoko* (Plate 99).[98] They carry smoking torches in their hands. Another shows houses burning on the shoreline (Plate 100). The violence of the past seems to be made present through these photographs.

The actions of the men of HMS Royalist caused significant changes in the lives of Roviana people and many of them are able to give some account of this event. The following example given by Steven Ilo is from someone with a genealogical connection to the events. It was given in direct response to my showing Steven a photocopy, even more illegible, taken from Faletau's photocopy. The history is not really reliant on any detail in the photocopy, but is nonetheless prompted by it - like a *bakiha* it functions as a mnemonic device through having stories attached to it. The history was recounted to an assembled crowd of adults and children looking through a large number of copy-prints I had with me.

> "I am Steven Ilo of Kokorapa, Nusa Roviana. I can only tell you what I know. How that burning happened. This is what I can tell you. It is the story of the three people who killed the white man at Hombuhombu. It happened because the white men were buying copra. There was a trader who lived on Hombuhombu. The people of Vuragare [a settlement area of Nusa Roviana] would dry their coconut and take it to

[98] There is a photocopy of this photograph in the Gizo Cultural Centre which bears the following typed caption; "NUSA ROVIANA, 1891. Officers and men of HMS Royalist stand near war canoes of Chief Hiqava. A short while later all these canoes were broken, skull collections destroyed and houses set on fire. This happened when Captain Davis was sent to Roviana by the British Government to force Hiqava to stop his headhunting raids. This photo, 90 years old, was obtained from the Fiji Museum. If anyone knows any stories about what happened on that day please write and tell us."

Plate 99 Macleay Museum 870140024

Plate 100 Macleay Museum 870140021

the trader to sell it. The buying price was bad from Peter Pratt so these people were not happy. They said this man lives on our island and that island belongs to us. He did not buy the island from us to operate his business there. He was not doing well for us. So the anger came from there for the Vuragare people. So the three men - warriors – went to Hombuhombu and killed ['whip' -*sekea*] the manager. After that there was an investigation by the white men. And that was how it became known that Vuragare people were responsible. That was when the man-o-war [*maneroa*] came and they bombed [*gona*] this place. This side of the island is deep and they stopped there to shoot at us. The people here had already heard the ship was coming. When they knew about it they left. They went to the shore [Munda]. Because there were people living near Bebea [a small island directly to the west of Nusa Roviana] they came to bomb around Bebea. They also bombed Nusa Roviana. They burnt all the houses and war canoes and all the warriors belongings. There was nothing left. They moved to those villages, Dunde, Kindu, Mono [hamlets of Munda]. That is how the steamer [*sitima*] came to bomb Nusa Roviana because these three men had killed a white man. I do not know them all but one of them is Lotana. He was the person who got those other two and planned the killing. They were the ones who went and killed the white man at Hombuhombu. Lotana's father was Avosia from Bilua [Vella Lavella] and he married a woman from Vuragare who bore Lotana. Lotana married a Simbo woman called Atunaru and she bore Sibapitu. Sibapitu married Dae and she bore Siope, Nemo, Kele, Isiah, Buta, Pozelmali. Those were their children. That was how we are related to Lotana. That was how we came to be and remain here today. They all ran away from here to Munda. Only Taqala remained here. They were just hiding everywhere. Then they left and stayed at Buala, Kepekepe, Langoro [all hamlets on the mainland opposite Nusa Roviana]. These were the places they settled. They lived along the Ilangana coast up to Dunde. That was how they came to live there. The people here came from Kazukuru and when the bombing from the man-o-war took place they left and went to the coast. Those from Kalikoqo [a settlement area on Nusa Roviana] were

at Nusa Banga, Sasavele, and Bethlehem [other villages around Roviana lagoon]. That is the story about how they came to be.[99]

Steven is not concerned with the same kinds of accuracy that are a requirement of the archival history. His history is an explanation of how groups of people got to be where they are now, how those living in the present are directly connected to those in the past. Steven recounts the impact of the Royalist attack on the temporary movement of his *butubutu* from Kokorapa to the mainland of New Georgia. It starts with a declaration of identity - this is a history that starts from where one person is in the present, it is history from one 'side'.[100] Steven also includes references to Kazukuru, an area in the interior of New Georgia island from which populations moved to the coast in the sixteenth century. The Royalist incident is one juncture in a series of population movements and relations to land that took place over a time-span of hundreds of years. The past is used to explain the current distribution of people.

The killers of Dabelle and the Malaitan employees of Pratt, are identified by Steven as three people, warriors [*tie varane*], from Vuragare, one of whom was his ancestor, Lotana. His story argues that it was their actions that were the direct cause of the Royalist attack. It raises the possibility of Roviana people misinforming the Royal Navy, or exploiting them for their own ends. However, it is not my intention to establish in any forensic way who killed Dabelle and the two un-named (in both accounts) employees, but to understand the variety of ways in which the photograph can be linked to history - how it is embedded in Roviana contexts. As Dureau has suggested in relation to 'first contact' narratives; "the details of historical fact are not necessarily of primary significance in these narratives of encounter because they are not necessarily about 'history' at all."[101]

What is missing from the history constructed from the printed papers is the living context that Steven's history provides. His history overtly starts from his own position in the present. Its significance for the history of Roviana people lies in the fact that it altered

[99] Steven Ilo, Nusa Roviana 18.11.00
[100] Hviding 1996

peoples' access to land, lines of succession, and connections with ancestral power. This is the meaning of the event for Roviana people. The actions of HMS Royalist caused the relocation of one of the main polities of Kokrapa - which had already split into two lines as a result of the infleunetial early nineteenth century *banara* Qutu having two wives - to found the village of Dunde on the Munda coast. It also possibly had an effect on the position of Nusa Roviana as the political centre of the 'confederation' of Kazukuru/Roviana peoples.

Roviana people recognise that history is full of sectarian interests and is intimately entangled with family reputations and relative standings. In most of my conversations with them about their history people expressed a desire to make it "come out straight", in the sense of preserving it in a form that had authority, and would be accepted as the truth. This desire for 'straightening' was voiced alongside an overt acknowledgement that history is partial and also that much history will never be 'straight' because those that knew the history have died without passing it on. Roviana people are acutely aware of the knowledge that has been lost, a loss that is often highlighted by looking at the kind of copy-prints that I took with me. They understood that people could deliberately construct a version of past events that presented themselves in a certain way to give themselves a real advantage in terms of land and economics. The theme of misinformation is a feature of many accounts of the Royalist incident;

> "I am Donald Maepio and I can tell you what I know. The story I heard from the old man [his uncle Ben Lamupio]. It is a story about one trader who bought an island without the land-owners knowledge. Noro was a man from Vuragare and his family owned that island called Hombuhombu. Noro only knew after the purchase was made that his island was sold to Edmund Peter Pratt. He was not happy. So he wanted to kill one of the two white men that ran the business. One day when Edmund Peter Pratt was away, Noro looked and saw the manager for Edmund Peter Pratt on the island. He came close while others were selling copra. When the manager was weighing, scaling and paying the copra, Noro came close and took his

[101] Dureau 2001 p.156

axe and chopped the head of the manager. This man died. He fell down dead. Everyone ran away. This was reported to the British and the message was passed to Edmund Peter Pratt. The warship came and anchored off Nusa Roviana and shot shells at the village. But the village was empty - everyone had run away. They knew exactly what was coming. They ran way to the Bareke river and here to Dunde. They landed and the sailors' lit fires in every house – nothing left. After Royalist went back a schooner from Australia came. They still wanted to punish the man who killed the white man. The schooner came and Noro paddled alongside it. The police called Noro and asked for his help. 'What do you want?' said Noro. 'We want to find the man who killed the white man'. 'I know him' said Noro. They went to Vuragare and Noro explained what the police wanted. Noro had changed his name. He pretended that he did not do anything. He said the man who killed the white man had gone to Marovo. The police asked Noro to go with them to Marovo. So they went. Noro was the pilot. They went to Marovo and the Marovo people said he [the killer] had gone to Kusaghe. They went to Kusaghe. The Kusaghe people said he had gone to Roviana. They went to Roviana. Somebody had died – someone from Noro's family. Noro told the police 'him, this was the man who killed the white man, now he is dead'. So the police stopped. Maybe Noro is a nickname?[102]

There are similarities between Donald's account and Steven's - the legitimacy of land ownership, and the killers' origins in Nusa Roviana. But here there is an explicit theme of misinformation supplied to the British is explicit. Luxton recorded a similar story in the 1950's;

"...Pendaro. He had planned and carried through almost every raid in Roviana for years. HMS Royalist was sent on a punitive expedition and Captain Davies was commissioned to capture Pendaro. When the ship came into the lagoon the first native aboard was Pendaro. Asked whether he knew Pendaro he promptly said

[102] Donald Maepio 3.3.01

"Yes", and guessing the reason for the question he volunteered to stay on board and act as pilot. He piloted HMS Royalist all round the group looking in vain for himself, living meanwhile on the best the ship could afford. He caused the mission a great deal of trouble in the early days, but before he died he approved his only son becoming a Christian."[103]

Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that history, as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university remains theoretically European history.[104] Only Europe is theoretically knowable, all other histories are matters of empirical research that fleshes out a theoretical skeleton that is substantially 'Europe'.[105] 'History' is precisely the site where the struggle goes on to appropriate, on behalf of the modern, other forms of memory. Chakrabarty suggests that Europe needs to be 'provincialised', and what is at stake here is a Roviana history that is not mimetic of a European model. History, certainly of the kind constructed from the 'printed papers', is firmly embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation state. But in the same way that photographs taken by colonial officials can contain within them indigenous spaces - they are the result of various encounters - so histories have all kinds of absences and ambiguities that allow counter-histories to surface.[106] Europe must not be over-privileged. Constructing a colonial history can amount to perpetuating that past precisely through a particular way of constructing it.[107]

I have suggested that Faletau's photocopy is valued as a material object, like a *bakiha*, that has histories attached to it - its role as a mnemonic device. But what of its visual legibility, or lack of it? What of the possibility of a visual history in Roviana? Neumann has argued that among the Tolai of Papua New Guinea, the model for history is filmic; a series of 'scenes' connected by a narrative structure.[108] The photograph of Pratt trading

[103] Luxton 1955 p.52
[104] Chakrabarty 1992
[105] ibid p.3
[106] See Edwards 2001 pp.107-131
[107] See Taussig 1992 p.38 for an account of this in relation to the Columbus quincentenary.
[108] Neumann 2000 p.72

Plate 101 Pratt trading copra on Hombuhombu. In Ribbe 1903 p.268

copra (Plate 101) reproduced in Ribbe's 1903 account of Roviana, has had, since its publication in Judith Bennett's book 'Wealth of the Solomons', a limited but potentially significant circulation in Roviana. Two or three families own a copy of the book and it is thought to "straighten" certain bits of history. The copies I saw were well-used and the small black and white illustrations of nineteenth century photographs reproduced in it, although few, are known by other people, including older people who cannot read. But, as the book does not contain local genealogies, or accounts of population movements and land rights, it is only consulted casually. This is in stark contrast to the photocopies of Roviana genealogies recorded by Hocart, access to which requires payment.[109] When I showed people the copy print I had of the photograph of Pratt it provoked stories of the copra trade, early traders, and HMS Royalist, but also a range of memories about events not visible in the image. Is there a sense in which this image is the catalyst for oral accounts? Or has it come to replace them? When Roviana people recount histories of HMS Royalist do they recall this image? Is there a sense in which this photograph has infected history - in which the line between the memory, the oral history, and the photograph is blurred? Some older Roviana people told me that as their memory failed they had been forced to identify particular *bakiha* by writing their names on them in pencil.

Keesing has written about the way in which he was co-opted into the Kwaio project of "straightening out" and "writing down" their history and kastom from the early days of his fieldwork in 1962.[110] He was pleased when the Kwaio "learn to write down their genealogies in proper anthropological fashion rather than in Biblical 'begats'".[111] For Roviana people the writing down of genealogies has caused significant problems. There are unresolved issues about the 'appropriate form' for history, and for *kastom*, to be recorded in and a realisation amongst Roviana people that a single, uncontested genealogy for Roviana is not possible. For Binney and Chaplin their project of 'taking photos home' to Maroi communities, was successful because;

[109] Schneider 1996
[110] Keesing 1990 p.296

> "the photographs conveyed a past which had not died in individual memories, but which had been suppressed in the European-recorded historiography. They became the means by which a peoples history was recovered and their particular understanding of it brought into the world of light."[112]

In Roviana the histories that can be 'recovered' from nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs are essentially family histories. In Euro-American models the entanglement of photographs and history proceeds by juxtaposing text and image, but which juxtapositions are the relevant ones, and for whom? Is the juxtaposition of the Royalist photocopy in the hands of Steven Ilo, together with the sound of his voice, better than that of the photograph from the Macleay Museum and the historical text I have constructed from the 'printed records'.

I have previously suggested that the construction of 'savagery' was an important way for the Methodist mission to establish a contrast between past and present, despite the fact that the mission did not actually bring an immediate end to raiding and headhunting, its association with 'peace' effectively "legitimates Christian hegemony in the present".[113] Missionary metaphors of light and dark, peace and hostility, savage and Christian have been localized, "driving a narrative of contact as the foundation of contemporary society".[114] Andrew Lattas has suggested that "Christianity requires a particular memory of the past...in order to objectify and mediate its conquest of subjects".[115] Do photographs then, reinforce a notion of 'savagery' that the mission relies on? Do they help construct the kinds of subjects that the mission requires? The attitude of contemporary Roviana people to their history, its' relevance, and the means for recording or preserving it, is influenced by several factors. There is a certain ambivalence and confusion about any histories that involve the time "*bifo lotu*". Despite the fact that people point out similarities, like those between accounts of sacrifice in the Old

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[111] ibid.
[112] Binney and Chaplin 1990 p.431
[113] See Dureau 2001 p.148 "On Simbo, what is suppressed is positive narrativization of the *taem bifo*. There is no space, in the master narrative of the coming of lotu and light, for light or peace in the past. Their pagan forebears lived in fear of spirits and headhunting."
[114] ibid p.151

Testament and their ancestors practices, those people "living before" were generally considered to be violent. People divide the practices and traditions of the "time before", also referred to as *pukerane* (long ago), into those that were good (often claimed to be identical too, and precursors of, Christian practices) and those that were bad.[116] For Roviana people the past before colonialism is in some respects undifferentiated - it is all *pukerane* - dates become important after 1902. The reactions of Roviana people to the photographs that I took with me were ambivalent. They see their ancestors as "violent" and "dark", but also people who were "strong", able to command respect and guardians of *kastom*. Several violent incidents in Munda in 2000-2001, associated with the 'ethnic tensions', highlighted these ambivalences.

The tension that many Euro-American commentators see between photography and memory is replicated in that between history and memory. Roviana people distinguish between 'remembering' and 'history',[117] but this is a very blurred distinction and is usually applied to distinguish more formal performances of oral histories from all other history/memory work. Michael Roth has argued that history only becomes important when memory is threatened; "history writing is a sign of forgetting because it indicates that collective memory is in the process of disappearing."[118] The past must be recorded in a permanent form and, for Roth, writing becomes;

> "one of the crucial vehicles for reconstructing or re-imagining a community's connection to its traditions. This is especially true for groups who have been excluded from the mainstream national histories that have dominated Western historiography, and who have suffered a weakening of group memory as part of their experience of modernity."[119]

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[115] Lattas 1996b p.297
[116] This is similar to the way Goldie was selective about earlier Roviana practices.
[117] Dureau 2001 p.150 reports a similar division amongst people on Simbo
[118] Roth 1995 p.10 (quoted in Dureau 2001)
[119] ibid.

In Euro-American models, photography is one way of recording history in permanent form. But before I consider the implications for photography's use in Roviana histories I want to look at the shift from oral accounts to the written word in Roviana.

Written Histories

The important court-case of 1971, which was the first case to establish a hierarchy of land rights in Roviana,[120] certainly reinforced a trend that perhaps started with the protectorate and the arrival of the mission, for an increasing emphasis on the authority and efficacy of the written word.[121] The Methodist mission with its focus on the written word of the Bible also exacerbated this trend. It was the written word that increasingly mediated and controlled peoples' access to land.

When Christopher Mamupio's father, Simon, was very old he felt a pressing need to pass on to his son the histories he had been told by his parents and those of important events in his own life. He asked Christopher to write down these histories in a small blue exercise book. Despite this work of oral history and its textual preservation, Christopher feels that his father "died without telling the important histories" and that as a result of this he himself knows very little.[122] One of the genealogies that Chris shows me is in the form of a stepped pyramid with his father at the apex on top of a 'base' of ancestors. Although Dureau argues that in the nineteenth century and earlier; "social legitimation being determined as much by achievement as by descent, genealogies were brief and relatively unimportant",[123] the effects of the 1971 court case mean that Roviana genealogies now strive to be as inclusive and historically far-reaching as possible.

Roviana people consider that the passing on of oral histories is only possible only through sustained repetition, through hearing the same history recounted again and again. The

[120] See Schnieder 1996, 1998
[121] See Chapter I for Inqava's victory over Pratt in a land dispute that was brought to court, despite the fact that Pratt had written papers and Inqava testimony was oral.
[122] Christopher Mamupio 24.2.01

only exceptions to this are people who are considered *matazona*, "good eyes" who have an enhanced capacity to remember. For Christopher it was not sufficient to hear a story only once for it to be 'kept safe'. It also made a great difference when the histories were told, and as Christopher only heard some of them from his father when he was an old man it was too late for him to really "keep them". Simon had asked his son to write down the history of the great feast (*inevana*) that installed him as *banara*, but both father and son decided that it was necessary to have a photograph of them talking together as evidence of when, where, and from whom Christopher had received his histories (Plate 102). The photograph has the date, January 3 1991, written by hand in biro on the reverse. Simon died a few months after the photograph was taken.

Producing the photograph from a small wooden box in which he also keeps the exercise book, a large and dilapidated book with other histories, and other pieces of paper with hand-written texts (an act of revelation), Christopher explained that he is worried because the print - "is no good, it will not keep everything". It bears the 'tidemarks' of mildew and, like other commercially produced colour prints of recent years, is unlikely to remain legible under the onslaught of climatic depredations. Christopher was keen for me to copy the photograph with my own camera as this would help "keep it safe", at least in the sense that I would provide him with a print that he thought would last longer. Our subsequent discussion about the camera as a 'witness' to history reveals Roviana attitudes to the uses of images as historical evidence, as this small extract shows;

> "Photographs keep history. You need to look at history to keep it safe.
>
> Why do photographs keep history?
>
> Photographs are strong for keeping history. You can see clearly and it all comes out. Photographs have power. They are straight. They are straight like writing. If you have a court case you go and look at the book. If it is not written it is lost.

[123] Dureau 1998 p.207

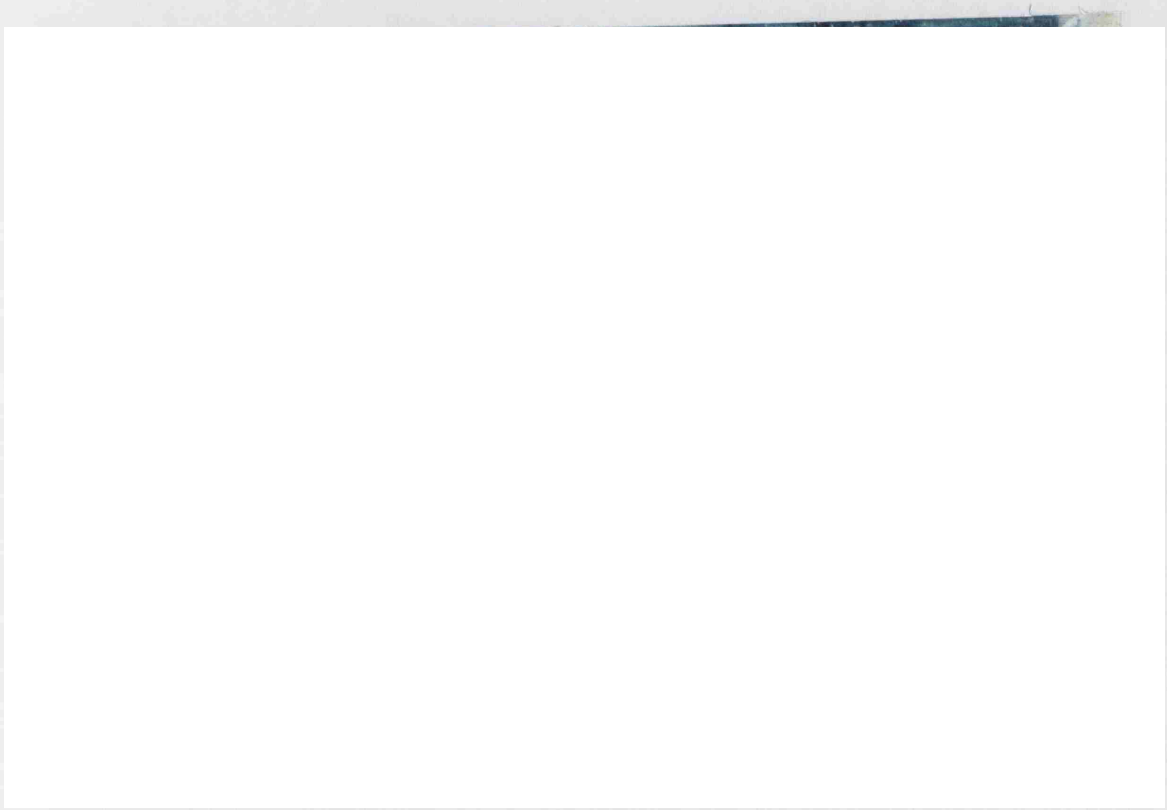

Plate 102 Chris Mamupio sitting with his father 1991

History is not talk now – only writing. Photographs make history. If you need to know history or *kastom* you look at the photograph. The photograph makes it come out straight. Photographs and books can keep history - so can *bakiha*.

Photographs are straight?

You see them and it comes out clear. The white men took those photographs [gesturing to my pile of copy prints of 19th century photographs] to keep history. If you want to know history you look."

Plate 102 is not a casual 'snapshot' of Christopher and his father talking, but a carefully arranged and managed performance. The photograph is a staging of history. It is seen to function as evidence, it is a witness to this particular encounter, to prove the fact of its having happened to those who might, in the future, challenge the veracity of Christopher's histories. In this sense it is a document of Christopher's identity, a form of visual genealogy. As well as an overtly and self-consciously historical photograph, it is also an example of the visual backing up the textual; an attempt to visually validate the origin of the handwritten text in the exercise book. Unlike the image of the men of HMS Royalist, the date here is important, inscribed in a shaky hand on the reverse of the print. There are two distinct kinds of witnessing at work here. Although the photograph is visible evidence of those bodies in that space, to what extent does it provide evidence of a particular date? Christopher felt that the date needed to be handwritten on the print. Despite the fact that the photograph was taken when Simon was alive there was a desire to fix the print with a date. Would its historical efficacy be impaired by the lack of a date?

"I put the date on so you can know that it was straight. It was this day that my father gave me the history. No-one can say it was not straight. It came from him. He was very ill and his voice was weak. I had to listen hard."

For Christopher, the date is a feature of this photograph's ability to function as a "straight" witness. The print, the date, and the text are entangled in a way that is mutually constitutive; each supports, or helps to validate the other. This is reminiscent of Euro-American models of photographic history; the photograph requires an exact date and a written history to be attached to it. Without the security of a date the photograph is worryingly hard to pin down. Without its fixity the photograph invokes a kind of historical instability.[124]

Ben Burt argues that many of the current disputes about who writes Pacific history, forget to ask who it is written for.[125] Burt points out that the debates about who is writing their history are largely academic for many Solomon Islanders, outside of certain groups of educated urban elites, since most people have no access to published material. In Roviana mall photocopied leaflets with brief historical accounts and photographs have considerably greater impact on a local level than Judith Bennett's 'Wealth of the Solomons'.[126] In Roviana, as elsewhere in the Solomons, oral traditions have been marginalised by an increasing dependence on the written word which has been promoted through events like the 1971 court case, a Western-style education which reinforces the authority of published history, and through a Christian dependence on texts. But how would the integration of oral histories (plural) into a history (singular) of Roviana serve local interests? Such a history might be one element in creating a regional identity, an outcome which some Roviana people see as desirable on several levels. As Western Province again considers autonomy from the rest of the Solomons - an issue which was first considered seriously in the mid-1970's in the run up to independence[127] - this identity is seen as important. But a tension remains between a Roviana version of this and any broader regional construction. Preserving or re-creating a strong Roviana tradition is also seen as a factor in attracting tourists to the area. In many cases in Roviana, as Schneider has argued that in Roviana; "tradition is objectified not as a unifying symbol, but in order to validate contesting claims over vast areas of forest land...[cultural

[124] Hence the facility on many cameras to print the date on the photograph automatically.
[125] Burt 1998 p.97
[126] No-one in Roviana had seen Jackson's 1978 thesis which covers some of the history of the area.
[127] See Dureau 1998

concepts] are all modified in the interests of furthering some people's claims" and, in disputing other peoples genealogies;

> "claimants try to turn closely related people into people of separate social origins. This process entails the negation of former common social identities predicated on traditional cultural concepts and results in a reinvention of social identities the reflects economic concerns"[128]

Writing about land issues in Roviana in the 1990's, Scheneider was unable to name the great majority of individuals in his entire thesis because of ongoing animosities. Burt is perhaps right to argue that any surviving oral tradition will inevitably be superceded, and that what is at stake is local control over this process. But maybe there is an alternative to its transformation into written form? Burt asks if there is "another Pacific history to be written in which rural people participate as both readers and writers?", but also points out that even if people agree what to write, it cannot actually be written.[129] Until the arrival of the Protectorate and the mission a certain flexibility over the distribution of land was a feature of Roviana polities, and this is characteristic of Melanesian land tenure systems.[130] Like the Kwara'ae of Malaita discussed by Burt, Roviana people have acquired a faith in the written word as an effective means of resolving disputes over land. But this has not effectively "straightened" history in Roviana there are now a whole series of competing written genealogies. Fixing histories and particularly genealogies in print has created new conflicts for Roviana people as the relationship of people to their lands has changed over time. Many people argued that some things are better forgotten rather than preserved or 'kept' through being written. Despite the fact that many individuals in Roviana have their written histories, or occasionally audio-tapes, stored safely in small boxes or baskets at home, they cannot be brought together to make one single history that is uncontested. Having a fixed history makes it more difficult to resolve differences in the present.[131] Burt suggests that any histories published or widely

[128] Schneider 1998 p.193
[129] Burt 1998 p.102
[130] ibid p109
[131] Keesing 1990

circulated histories locally in the Solomons need to be written in the local language rather that English – but many Roviana people requested that I write down their words in English as this would make them "come out strong". Are photographs another way of making histories 'come out strong'? Is the imposition of the written word always inevitable? Despite their apparent fixity, photographs may be better suited to local requirements for history to be flexible.

Peter Burke has argued that "images allow us to 'imagine' the past more vividly"[132], but also insists that images are "mute witnesses and it is difficult to translate their testimony into words".[133] The role of imagination is key to my arguments in favour of photographs as sources for history. Christopher's photograph of him sitting with his father is concerned with the 'testimonial' the image can offer - with the camera as historical witness. But it is also concerned with other invocations of the past. Sitting with the photograph delicately in his hands, the sound of Simon's voice comes back to Christopher and he is overcome with memories.

As Edwards succinctly points out "the photograph is not really 'of' an event, but is the event".[134] Christopher looks at this photograph because he's talking to me about history. The event staged in the photograph is re-enacted between Christopher and myself. The photograph functions as an aid to oral history as well as assuring the validity of an oral history transformed into text. Although Christopher's photograph of him with his father bears a cursory resemblance to European/North American models of photography and history, it is also caught up with ideas of presence and proximity. Christopher sits next to his father on his bed, his head turned at an angle as though listening to Simon's voice. We can see Christopher hearing the history. For Christopher the photograph conjures up his fathers' voice.

[132] Burke 2001 p.13
[133] ibid p.14

Rubbish

In relating the Royalist incident to the movements of his *butubutu*, Steven Ilo's account above, also demonstrates one reason why the incident is referred to in conversations about problems caused by the recent 'ethnic tensions' in the Solomons, such as Faletau's passing comment that I started with. In 2000-2001 the influx of 'refugees' into Roviana from the 'troubles' on Guadalcanal had exacerbated long-standing arguments about land rights as people built new houses and made new claims for land, or reinstated dormant ones. The actions of HMS Royalist caused a significant shift in residence patterns just as the problems in Honiara caused many Roviana people living in the capital to return home.

The 'troubles' also affected Roviana people in other ways. As well as physically making more firearms available, as people brought these back with them from the capital, events in Honiara had an impact on local conceptions of violence in the past, present and future. A series of violent incidents in Munda and elsewhere in Roviana - including the attempted killing of an expatriate, rape, and armed robbery - threatened local peoples ideas of acceptable behaviour and cultural continuity. The disappearance of respect in the younger generations, and other perennial concerns, were thrown into sharp focus and became the subject of heated debates. Donald Maepio's comment is typical of many I heard;

> "Before people had respect. *Kastom* was strong. If you did something wrong you had to pay a fine. People had respect for their elders. Now it has all finished. Now young people smoke [marijuana] and drink - they have guns - there is nothing for them. We need to make *kastom* strong again. Otherwise it will all be lost. Everything now is rubbish."[135]

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[134] Edwards 2001 p.110
[135] Donald Maepio 3.2.01

Plate 103 graffiti in Munda

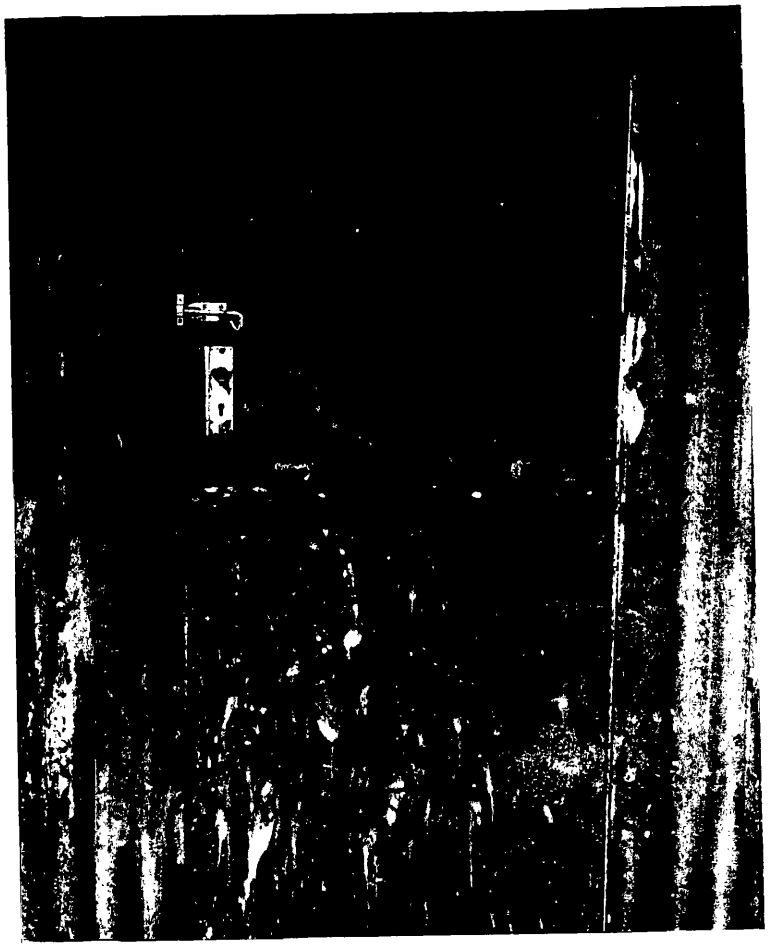

Plate 104 graffiti in Munda

Plate 105 graffiti in Munda

Plate 106 graffiti in Munda

Munda is now home to two local youth gangs, Westside and Tupac (after the Rap singer, Tupac Shakur) and marijuana is grown and smoked by teenagers, although currently not in large enough quantities to initiate the drugs-for-guns trade that is now widespread in Papua New Guinea. But people did express grave concerns that unless action was taken, the kinds of 'rascalism' that they associated with Papua New Guinea would soon spread to Roviana. Munda gangs mark out their territory through graffiti (Plates 103, 104, 105 and 106) mimicking styles they encounter in videos and music magazines. As a result of one particular generational dispute Faletau was beaten up by a much younger relative. He spent several days in the local hospital, shaken by the collapse of respect that such an action signalled, as much as physically injured. The attack represented an assault on his conceptions of how things should be. It was against a backdrop of this kind of violence that discussions of history and HMS Royalist took place. For Faletau the violence of current events was beyond his understanding - "the youth are crazy in their hearts". For him, relating recent incidents to the Royalist attack was a way of making some sense of them. Histories often reveal more about the present of their telling than any past events, and Faletau's reactions to violent events in Munda were concerned with change and the ability to control change. The violence threatened Faletau's image of a "peaceful" Christianized Roviana.

The actions of 'youth' also represent a threat to memory for a particular generation of Roviana people who have some knowledge of *kastom*. The lack of interest shown in *kastom* creates a fear of its disappearance. Many older people complained that young people were not interested in their knowledge and would not listen to oral histories. The Solomon Islands population growth rate has steadily increased over the last two or three decades and, as a result, a large proportion of the population are now aged under 20. There are very few job opportunities for those leaving school and, particularly when young people have been to Honiara for their education, there is little or no interest in returning to Roviana and taking up a subsistence living based on fishing and gardening. Large numbers of bored teenagers are turning to marijuana and, in the absence of money to buy imported alcohol, are making a local 'moonshine' called *kwaso*. In Honiara there is a growing problem with street crime and drug and alcohol abuse, and this was

replicated on a smaller scale in Munda with the sudden influx of people fleeing the capital in 2000.

In comparison to contemporary events, the actions of the officers and men of HMS Royalist are understandable. British 'pacification' did not result in the death of large numbers of Roviana people. As Dureau points out, although they destroyed *tomoko* and religious relics, actions that undoubtedly had a significant impact, the British did not leave a "legacy of death that could contribute to resistance and assertive identity building".[136] There is a sense of loss, but there is surprisingly little anger about the actions of the men of HMS Royalist. The incident is recounted in the same way as stories about raids on Roviana carried out by people from Vella Lavella. It is seen as a retaliation for the murder of one person from a 'side'; Roviana people reportedly saw all "white men" (*tie vaka* - people of the ship) as belonging to the same 'side'.[137] Although both the Royalist incident and current events are beyond the control of Roviana people, the former is knowable in the sense that the actions of those involved are explainable in terms of local models and, as it happened in the past, the outcomes are known. The violent incidents in Munda demonstrated the uncertainty of the future.

In 1977, one year before official independence for the Solomon Islands and one year after self-rule was granted, John Talasassa led a breakaway movement that sought to establish a separate Western Solomons.[138] A delegation of prominent western Solomons politicians, funded by Christian Fellowship Church, went to Australia to seek constitutional advice about the legality of such a move. Independence Day was not celebrated in the western Solomons, and was also boycotted by New Georgians in Honiara. Commenting on these events, Dureau reports that "New Georgians resisted attempts to replace the Union Jack with the Solomons flag and deliberately interpreted the Royal Family's visit to Gizo as a neutral visit to the west."[139] Older Roviana people

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[136] Dureau 2001 p.143

[137] Keesing has argued that Malaitans viewed Europeans as a single group, and as such they were responsible for each others actions and therefore vengeance could be taken on any one of them (1986 note p.270)

[138] See Premdas et al 1983

[139] Dureau 1998 p.217

recall the colonial past in favourable terms, at least rhetorically. Independence day is now celebrated in Roviana, but it provides an occasion for a colonial nostalgia. People point out that under British rule it was the Queen's birthday that was celebrated annually, and make comments about the desirability of re-establishing a protectorate. It is not that the events depicted in Faletau's photocopy are seen in a positive light, they are not, but there is an ambivalence that surrounds the image, that mitigates against it being seen solely in negative terms.[140]

The other mitigating factor against negative readings of the Royalist incident is the way in which notions of 'savagery' have been displaced onto Malaitans. This was a feature of Roviana reactions to the violence in Honiara associated with the 'ethnic tensions'. The perceived threat of Malaitan aggression was a part of daily life in 2000-2001. There were regular rumours that members of the Malaitan Eagle Force were planning an attack on Munda or Gizo in which they would arrive in high-powered speedboats from Honiara and would loot, kill and burn. There is a sense in which Roviana people have assimilated colonial ideas about Malaitan 'pagans',[141] but these views are also informed by oral histories of violent encounters between Roviana people and Malaitans working for European traders in the nineteenth century. Several Malaitan families were evicted from Munda after the armed coup in March 2000, and their burnt out houses remain potent symbols of the current disorder.[142] The displacement of 'savagery' onto others allows a more favourable perception of powerful ancestors who, despite being 'before *lotu*', were even then "not as violent" as Malaitans. In this context the actions of the British are seen as negative, but not because they were in essence 'bad' people.

If we return to Faletau's passing comment and his photocopy, both can now be seen in a new light. Despite its illegibility, the photocopy endows the Royalist event with a 'visibility' that enhances its significance. The visibility it enables is not a product of any visual clarity in the image, but on the way in which the image functions like an object of

[140] So we should not read it as solely about the imposition of colonial power.
[141] See Keesing 1990

memory. Rather than the detritus of history, both Faletau's comment and the photocopy are integral to understandings and expectations of history in contemporary Roviana. Faletau's conflation of past and present is photographic. As Benjamin suggests; "to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it "as it really was". It means to seize a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."[143] The Euro-American notion that the present only emerges through differentiating and relating itself to the past, like that which suggests that lived moments of perception are always underpinned by memories, has led to a whole stream of anthropological thought which suggests that for a people to control how they define themselves in the present, they must control how they define the past.[144] What are the possibilities for a visual history in Roviana?

Encounters

A photograph of a group of seated Roviana men (Plate 107) depicts an encounter that might be considered an originating moment in Roviana history - the encounter on the verandah of the first mission building on Nusa Zonga between Methodist missionaries, including Goldie, and the "first congregation".[145] Sitting on the right at the front of the group is Boaz Veo a prominent Munda *banara*, with Inqava sitting front left with his hat.[146] The photograph was probably not taken by Goldie, but by his assistant Rooney circa 1903. How can the photograph be read in relation to Roviana history? Although it is easy to see this image as yet another instance of the camera in the service of a colonising force, the mission, it also contains the elements of a Roviana social space. Edwards has argued that in understanding the historical potential of photographs;

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[142] Many Malaitan "squatters" were evicted from their homes on the road between Munda and Noro. However, some long-term Malaitan residents of Munda were allowed to stay, but only those married to local women or working temporarily in the bank.

[143] Quoted in Cadava 1997 p.63

[144] See Lattas 1996b p.257

[145] Box - de B 16 a - Methodist Archives, Auckland. A further print (Box - de B16 b) has the caption "First congregation on Nusa Songa of mission".

[146] See photograph of Boaz Veo with his wife Miriam (Box - de B16 d). Miriam has been posed standing in profile to show that she is wearing *pupukete*.

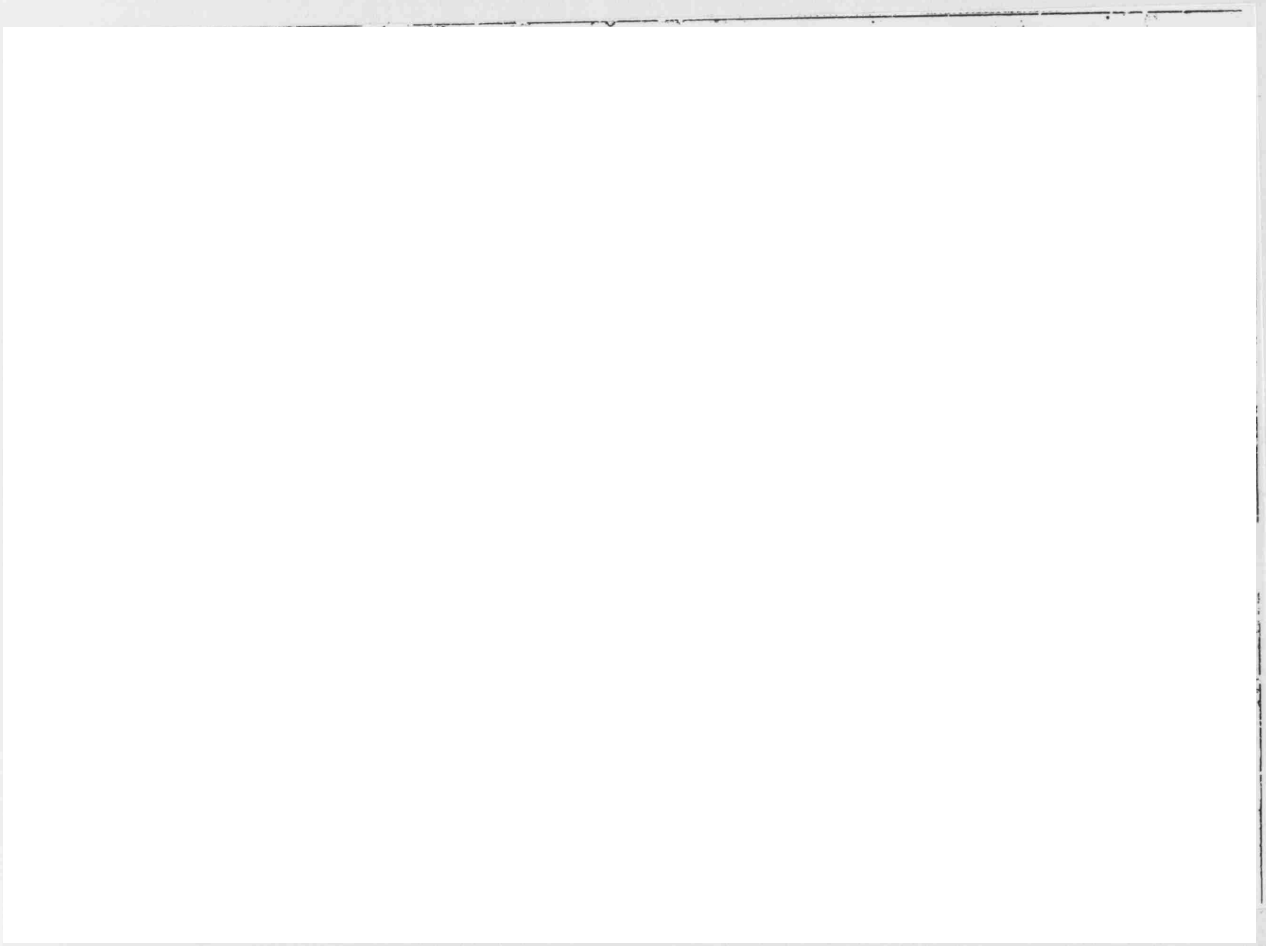

Plate 107 Inqava, Boaz Veo and other Rovian men on the verandah of the first mission building on Nusa Zonga ca.1903 Methodist Archives, Auckland de B16

> "we should allow, on the one hand, for the institutional practices of observation and the enabling power relations translated through the photograph. On the other hand, recodability and indiscriminate inscription make it possible for them not simply to replicate the power relations of their production, but also to inscribe and present multiple spaces and multiple histories that have the potential to contest or subvert the ideological discourses of the image's creation."[147]

Like the photographs of Samoan chiefs sitting on the quarterdeck of a British gunboat discussed by Edwards, this image attempts to doubly constrain Roviana people both within the confines of a physical European space - the verandah - and within the mimetic space of the photograph with its constricting frame. The Roviana men stare directly at the camera, facing their future. But even within this deeply colonial space there is an element of local social space. In keeping with Roviana traditions of respect, the *banara*, Inqava and Boaz Veo, sit at the front and the elder *banara*, Inqava, is given more deferential space surrounding him. This is an enactment of Roviana space within a Euro-American one.

Boaz Veo had another Roviana name - Guipitu - before he was baptized.[148] He had travelled to Australia as a hand on the Roviana-based trader Frank Wickham's boat and had stayed with Wickham in Paramatta in Sydney. He re-named his own hamlet after that suburb on his return. Veo had participated in headhunting raids to Choiseul and Santa Isabel, but according to living relatives in 2001 he did not take part in any fighting or killing but only looked after the *tomoko* - a job called *ala*. Veo was baptised in 1912 along with 30 others when he changed his name to Boaz Veo. Inqava is seen by many Roviana people today as a "man of the past" from "before the mission (*bifo lotu*)" - he was opposed to the mission - and Veo as a man of the present, a man "of the mission (*blong lotu*)". Veo, despite being "born in darkness", went on to play a prominent role in the success and development of the mission before his death in 1943. Does this

[147] Edwards 2001 p.109
[148] Rev. John Veo Mbitimbule 16.3.01

photograph then reveal the point of change, the "before" and "after" of Roviana history? Inqava representing the past, Boaz Veo the future. Is this the point at which history changes for Roviana people? Or perhaps a change in how history is inscribed?

Dening has talked about the "theatre of encounter",[149] and the photograph reproduces a colonial space of encounter. But Edwards has argued that there are two versions of context that need to be applied to photographs in relation to history; "the 'containing' or 'originating' (of who, what, why and when?) and the 'dense'" the subsequent relations that the photograph is entangled in.[150] This photograph currently sits in the Methodist Archives and people in Roviana have not seen it. Dening argues that history is 'texted' through the contexts of its preservation,[151] and this is the case as long as the photograph remains in the archive. But the power of the archive could be fractured if the photograph was circulated in Roviana. This would move the image from a 'containing' context to a 'dense' one. In one sense looking at this photograph replicates a colonial space, we have the view that Goldie or Rooney had, we stand in their place. The camera is positioned at waist level; perhaps the operator was sitting, or had lowered the tripod to the level of peoples' heads? We re-enact the encounter - the image asks us to re-live it - and the photograph confronts us with the actuality of the event. This happened.

Alfred Gell has suggested that the *malanggan*, a ritual funerary carving from New Ireland is; "a *temporally dispersed object*, an object *at* no specific time or place, but moving through time and place, like a thunderstorm".[152] This could also serve as a description of photographs. Rather then freezing time, photographs can set ideas of time in motion. This photograph concerns a moment of confrontation in which Roviana people encounter their future. Edwards has argued, after Eduardo Cadava, that; "photographs interrupt history and open up another possibility of history, one that spatialises time and temporalises space."[153] This photograph concerns different conceptions of time. Although this depicts a Roviana space within a colonial one, the mission is a space that Roviana people will

[149] Dening 1994 p.452
[150] Edwards 2001 p.109
[151] Dening 1988 p.26
[152] Gell 1998 p.226 quoted in Strathern 2001 p.280

learn to occupy. As Edwards points out; "context is creative, suggestive and provocative".[154] The kinds of creativity that can result from shifting photographs from archives into other spaces reveals their historical usefulness.

> "the mere notion of photography, when we introduce it into our meditation on the genesis of historical knowledge and its truth value, suggests this simple question, could such and such a fact, as it is narrated, have been photographed?"[155]

This was Paul Valery's comment on the effect of photography on historical thought in the first hundred years since its' inception. Does this equation hold true in Roviana? In discussing the relation of photography to history Edwards has argued that;

> "photography here cannot be reduced to a totalizing abstract practice, but instead comprises photographs, real visual objects engaged with in social space and real time. In such contexts, the analysis of photographs cannot be restricted only to sorting out structures of signification, but must take into account that signifying role of photography in relation to the whole nature of the object and its social biography."[156]

Edwards argues that photographs are "points of fracture", points that allow an "opening out" and the possibility of new histories.[157] Although they hold out the promise of historical fixity, they are moments dislocated from the flow of life. They need to be contained in narrative structures to enable them to enunciate or 'speak' history, and in many ways they defy any fixed diachronic connections, as Faletau's comment reveals. Their ability to mediate between the private/personal and public/collective spheres is seen as central to their historical efficacy in Euro-American models. Is this the case in Roviana? In March 2001 I helped organise an exhibition of the copy-prints I had taken to Roviana at the Sokogaso Learning Centre in Munda. This was at a point when a series of

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[153] Edwards 2001 p.116 after Cadava 1997 p.61
[154] ibid p.109
[155] Valery 1980 p.195
[156] Edwards 2001 p.2

violent incidents occurred in Munda, and the combination revealed Roviana expectations of photography and history. That they can preserve history in some way is the belief that underwrites their use in projects where they are 'returned' to communities. As John Berger suggests; "if the past becomes an integral part of the processes of people making their own history, then all photographs will re-acquire a living context instead of being arrested moments."[158] Photographs are useful for preserving history and tradition and the simple act of returning them from the archives is tantamount to returning history. Many of these projects do not question what photography is in the cultures that will host this 'return' and fail to heed Edwards advice. Photographs from Euro-American archives are undoubtedly 're-animated' in being connected to Roviana people, but to what extent can they re-empower? In Euro-American models it is taken for granted that history is constitutive of identity - without history you have no identity - hence the ongoing battles over Pacific histories.[159] But, in terms of recent arguments about Pacific history, the battle has largely been between oral history and written history - where do photographs figure in this?

The Sokogaso Learning Centre was set up in Munda in the 1990's to promote Roviana *kastom* and to provide vocational training, such as typing courses, for local people. It has attempted to promote itself as a "Roviana Custom School" and in presenting a case to the Solomons government for funding, its founder Robertson Bato argued that;

> "A/ There is a need to develop the existing philosophy of the Roviana culture and custom.
> B/ It is the core of the life-style of the Roviana community.
> C/ Unless it is done, it will become increasingly lost.
> D/ This is in line with other area of Solomon Island, some similar projects which had been taken place. The western Province need something to preserve the unique characteristics of Melanesian culture that are gradually fading away."[160]

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[157] ibid p.6
[158] Berger 1980 p.57
[159] See Borofsky et al 2000
[160] Sokogaso promotional leaflet 1999

In 2000-2001 all the Roviana people I was in contact with thought that photographs could play a vital role in preserving their culture. This is a Roviana salvage paradigm. Within the context of the Custom School nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs had a performative efficacy. As Edwards has argued; "the heuristic device of performativity makes it possible to see images as active, as the past is projected actively into the present by the nature of the photograph itself and the act of looking at the photograph."[161] Edwards goes on to relate Elizabeth Tonkin's notions of genre and expectancy, developed in relation to oral history, to photography;

> "expectancy of the medium might be glossed here as how we expect photographs, with their beguiling realism, to tell us about the past in given performative or interpretive spaces and with their various audiences. The 'horizon of expectation' determines the use of images in relation to the answers they are expected to give and the questions that can be asked of them"[162]

In the weeks leading up to the exhibition I talked to many Roviana people about the best way to display the photographs. Many people suggested that the photographs should have the "stories" written out and physically attached to them. My suggestion that people should be invited to come and recount stories was politely discounted. In the exhibition the photographs had multiple histories and memories attached to them in the form of types texts, each of which included the name of the narrator and the date. In this public context Roviana people required their history and memories "straightened out". The exhibition was opened with many speeches and a feast of fish, 'pudding' and potato, each individual portion wrapped in its own small woven basket (*epata*). A large number of people from Munda and from surrounding villages in the lagoon turned up on the opening afternoon and in the following days.

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[161] Edwards 2001 p.18 See also Poignant 1992
[162] ibid p.21

There were many expectations of the photographs. For some it was the first time they had seen relatives or ancestors, and the images provoked laughter and tears. There were discussions about the material culture shown in the photographs; the names of baskets were disputed, as were those of particular shapes of woven sun-shades (*toropai*) that Roviana men wore (and still wear). People could put faces to names they had known for a long time. People looked at the photographs in excited groups and stared at them individually for long periods. They marvelled at the 'clarity' of the images. For older people they often had an intense emotional impact as memories resurfaced. For younger people and teenagers they were often a source of amusement, although they prompted questions. The expectations spanned the personal and the collective, the private and the public, often within the same image. Photographs in the exhibition revealed to many Roviana people a series of silences - absences of history - they demonstrated how much had been lost. But the photographs also invoked memories. As Benjamin has argued; "an image is that in which the Then and the Now come together, in a flash of lightning, into a constellation."[163] Photography is a valuable and creative means for Roviana people to consider local histories because, as Edwards points out, it "inserts the specific moment of *experience*, that element which is so often lacking in historical writing, into the historical consciousness by the very act of making it visible."[164]

Discussing the relationship between history and memory, Eduardo Cadava has suggested that; "just as the camera seeks to fix a moment of history, so memory wants to bring history within grasp".[165] These memories were not necessarily related to identifying material culture in the images, or recounting oral histories of particular events. They were not reliant on visual clarity, but on presence. In this sense the photographs were unpredictable and volatile. Older people commented that;

> "When I see the photographs from before (*maqomaqo pukerane*) they [ancestors/relatives] are here. I can talk to them. They see me. I hear the voice of

[163] Benjamin quoted in Cadava 1997 p.40
[164] Edwards 1995 p.49
[165] Cadava 1997 p.xviii

my grandfather. He used to bring us fish. I would sit by the door waiting for him..."[166]

This corporeality is a feature of writing about other aspects of Melanesian material culture that have suggested that artefacts are compressed performances.[167] Roy Wagner has suggested that in Melanesia "an image can and must be witnessed or experienced, rather than merely described or summed up verbally...the experiences of its effects is at once its meaning and its power...in producing images, people produce the effects by which they know what they themselves really are".[168] This corporeality of the image was made apparent during the exhibition. Photographs were continually being touched, rubbed, caressed - some were taken down to be handled. They were objects of silent communion and fixed visual attention, of visual reciprocity. The exhibition revealed the possibilities of photographs acting, like a range of Roviana religious sites and relics, as potential sites of memory and history for Roviana people on both a community level and a personal one.

"I was surprised to see them [ancestors/relatives]. They are gone, but they are here. We can keep them. We can learn from these photographs (*maqomaqo*). We can know our *kastom* from them. If people see them they will know that Roviana *kastom* was strong. It comes out clear. We can keep it."[169]

Writing of the situation in Santa Isabel in the western Solomons, Geoffrey White argues that;

"reviving and promoting traditions will require that young people take an interest in local culture. In particular, if the knowledge of local history and ancestry - the basis for collective identification with the land - is to be reproduced, storytelling, feasts and ritual celebrations will have to contend with newer pursuits...On the other

[166] Joyce Kevisi 18.3.01
[167] Strathern 1990
[168] Wagner 1986 p.295
[169] Alessasa Bisili 18.3.01

> hand, the electronic gadgets that bring a taste for rock music and Rambo may also be put to use in the service of custom, as in the now popular tape-recording and videotaping of custom stories and performances."[170]

Roviana teenagers who came to the exhibition did so because they were curious. Some had heard histories from their parents and wanted to see their ancestors for themselves. There was much laughter. Their relationship with photographs is different to that of people over the age of twenty-five. Their world is one in which photographs are 'mere images', the stuff of discos and parties, of posing like Rap stars. In 2000 the Solomon Islands government passed a law banning the wearing of camouflage clothing and military uniforms, and the sale of replica guns - all of which were extremely popular with Munda teenagers. The arrival in Munda of a group from the Bougainvillean Revolutionary Army, with their automatic weapons, military uniforms and high powered speedboats, was an exciting event for Munda teenagers and prompted much talk of copying their "style". Despite avowedly being anti-Malaitan, Munda teenagers wanted to copy the "style" the MEF adopted - a mixture of Reggae, Ragga and Papua New Guinea 'raskol' "looks". This was in direct opposition to the various Guadalcanal armed factions who adopted *kastom* clothing such as loincloths. They found the photographs from "before" amusing and were vague about their historical value. For them, photographs, despite being scarce numerically, have achieved an 'everydayness'. They wanted to exchange photographs with girlfriends and boyfriends like their parents did in the 1960's and some could produce a photograph from a pocket and tell me that "this is..."

For Ernst Junger the sheer mass of historical images in 1930's Europe threatened the link between memory and experience,[171] but in Roviana the image is a scarce resource. The 150 or so copy-prints that I took with me in 2000-2001 seem a small base on which to construct a visual history. But archival photographs, like the copy-prints I took with me, are considered an immensely valuable resource by Roviana people. Their use in any project of Roviana history or identity is only a recent and emerging possibility.

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[170] White 1991b p.59
[171] See Cadava 1997 p.xxvii

Photographs are not valued as historical evidence in Roviana, at least not in the way dictated by any Euro-American model. Although there is an interest in the kinds of material culture they depict, their use extends far beyond this. Their efficacy resides in their ability to conjure up a plenitude of memories and histories.[172] Diane Losche's notion of "double vision" seems appropriate here: "indigenous historical consciousness is not necessarily defined around the same events or chronologies as European narrative. It may occupy a different ground altogether."[173]

Edwards argues against decoding the image to reveal a truth, and suggests that, in approaching its relation to history, the focus should be on "how photographic meaning is made in the precise intersections of ethnography, history and the past, both as a confrontation with the past and as an active and constituent part of the present".[174] This is what happened at the exhibition. Euro-American cultural assumptions and expectations about photography and history, with their focus on indexicality, limit thinking about the work it does in other cultural contexts. She suggests that what is needed is the reintroduction of "the sense of magic, of theatre and even of alchemy, for history too embraces such subjectivities."[175] This is the alchemy of Faletau's barely legible photocopy.

Memory-Objects

Benjamin's suggestion that historiography follows the principles of photography - "there can be no thinking of history that is not at the same time a thinking of photography"[176] - needs to be qualified. Eduardo Cadava's commentary on Benjamin's ideas of history and photography makes many useful and illuminating points,[177] but it effectively ontologises Benjamin. Benjamin was writing about photography in a specific time and place; 1930's

[172] See Lippard 1992 for a series of diverse responses to photographs of Native North Americans.
[173] Losche 1999 p.4
[174] Edwards 2001 p.7
[175] ibid p.19
[176] See Cadava 1997 p.xviii
[177] Cadava 1997

Weimar Germany. What may have been true of the connections between photography and history in that context cannot be simply and unquestioningly universalised as photography's nature. What is required are closely observed ethnographies of photography. As Neumann has written in relation to Pacific histories, there is a need "to subvert History with histories, no longer their grandiose history as an alternative to the colonial one, but breaking down the category history".[178] A similar process needs to occur in relation to photography.

Catherine Keenan has suggested that; "photographs do not only supplement memory but actually configure it."[179] The relation between photographs and memory is ambivalent in many Euro-American models. There is a popular understanding of photography as capable of 'keeping memories', as though they could structurally incorporate the meaning of the event. They act as containers of memory. But, as critics of this view have argued, by transforming the memory into appearance, photography also works against memory.[180] In fixing the moment visually as surface appearance, the photograph fails to grasp the significance of the moment for memory - the clusters of meanings that circulate around it. In an Euro-American context the durability seemingly offered by the photograph offers the possibility of creating a permanent memory-image. But this very permanence means that the image comes to replace the memory through being repeatedly imprinted on our memories. Looking at the photograph repeatedly over time allows it to gradually displace the memory. As Barthes argues; "not only is the photograph never in essence a memory...it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory."[181] Kracauer also denies the links between photography and memory on the grounds that photographs remember too much, as opposed to memory, which only retains what is significant.[182] Photographs then reveal what has been forgotten, the silences and omissions, and, for Barthes, in doing so they threaten his faith in memory. The lack of durability of some photographs in Roviana, their gradual disappearance, threatens not just

[178] Neumann 2000 p.75
[179] Keenan 1998 p.60
[180] Barthes 1984, Sontag 2001 (but see Sontag 2003 for an update of her position), Kracauer 1993
[181] Barthes 1984 p.91
[182] Kracauer 1993 p.425

memory, but a corresponding bodily decay. Photography is a corporeal medium in Roviana.

Benjamin also argued that photographs could not function as memories because they had dispensed with the aura of previous forms of representation.[183] The opposite is true for photographs in Roviana - photographs are distinctly auratic objects. Benjamin;

> "Experience of the aura rests on the transposition of a response...to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return." [184]

Photographs in Roviana possess exactly this kind of ability. Benjamin implies that it is the investment made in an object, rather than any essential nature, that confers aura. Benjamin's argument is complex; he suggests that the personal photograph of an individual is "inhuman, one might even say deadly", it cannot return our gaze; but he also argues that they are the last resort of 'cult-value'. Roviana photo-objects return the gaze because they are imbued with aura. The photo-object or photo-relic is engaged with corporeally through touch and sight. Photographs are sites of memory in Roviana because of their material properties. The exhibition demonstrated that even in a public forum the photographs could begin to be emplotted within memories. Photographs can function like involuntary memories, they are a catalyst for memories that 'flash up' and that cannot be contained by the photograph.

Neumann has argued that historians in the Pacific need to listen "to the others truth without presupposing a truth of things" – entering into a dialogue in which both sets of expectations are shifted."[185] He goes on to suggest that;

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[183] Benjamin 1992
[184] Benjamin 1992 p.184
[185] Neumann 1992 p.121

"histories that are written down to be taught are in danger of becoming immobilized pieces of knowledge. In an oral discourse that relies on memory, the past is constantly recreated in the present. The authority of the written word could easily arrest the process of recreation. Knowledge that has been immobilized by writing it down is already awarded great prestige...who wants to dispute the validity of a given statement if...it says so in the book?"[186]

In Euro-American models there is a recognition that written histories can be revised and re-written. There is a similar acknowledgement of competing histories that accompanies a belief in the authority of the written word in Roviana. Committing a history to paper is seen as a way of making it "straight", but also of making it "strong". Histories will continue to be written in Roviana, but photographs are better suited to the mobile work of history. They can provoke histories and memories that are not constrained, and they retain a fluidity that is lost with the written word. In Euro-American models photographs seem to hold out the promise of fixing history, but they do not. Photographs seem to offer the promise of historical fixity, of certainty, but not only do they not do this, it is precisely because they do not do this that they are such useful tools for creating Roviana histories. As Neumann goes on to suggest: "learning the past does not mean memorizing the history but learning the work of remembering".[187] What does Faletau 'keep' in his briefcase? He keeps the possibility of 'bringing forth' a whole range of histories, and of 'opening-up' memories. He keeps a series of photo-objects that do the work of remembering. They hold out the possibility of what Neumann calls a "savage history".[188]

"When I look at this [photocopy] I remember my father..."[189]

[186] ibid p.256
[187] ibid p.258
[188] Neumann 2000 p.72
[189] Faletau Leve 20.3.01

Epilogue

One of the many copy-prints I took with me to Roviana was that of a photograph taken by Sir John Thurston on a visit to Roviana in 1894 when he presided over the first major land-rights cases to go through the newly imposed colonial legal system.[1] The photograph shows HMS Royalist off the shore of Nusa Zonga, looking south-east towards Rendova with Hombuhombu in the middle distance (Plate 108). When I showed the copy-print to Faletau he expressed no concern for who the photographer was or the date the image was made. Instead we engaged in a short discussion about the possible location from which the photograph was taken. Faletau's first priority was to orientate himself within the landscape depicted. Having established this, he then announced that the ship depicted must be SS Titus, the ship that brought Goldie and the other Methodist 'teachers' from Australia to set up the mission in Roviana on 23 May 1902. He asked for a copy of the image and used it as the model for a painting he titled "The Coming of Lotu" (Plate 109). Faletau was intent on "copying" (*kumkumbere*) the photograph - a process which took him several days - but he was unconcerned by the historical inaccuracy which I pointed out to him.[2] He considered his painting a "true history", and the "copying" was a matter of replicating a pleasing composition rather than invoking any sense of indexical fidelity. Significantly he decided to change the colour of the ship, from black to white, to show the coming of the "light" of *lotu*.

This is a denial of the photograph's historical indexicality. Siegfried Kracauer suggested that; "in order for history to present itself, the mere surface coherence of the photograph must be destroyed",[3]and here the surface of the photograph is incorporated into another history in a way that visually demonstrates the fluidity of Roviana historio-visual, as opposed to -graphical, processes. Faletau's painting is a mimetic ritual of conversion; not

[1] Jackson 1978 p.115
[2] The newly arrived missionaries actually stayed with the trader Frank Wickham at his house on Hombupeka island before constructing mission buildings on Nusa Zonga.
[3] Kracauer 1995 p.52

Plate 108 HMS Royalist off the shore of Nusa Zonga. Sir J.B.Thurston 1894 Royal Geographical Society B8047

Plate 109 Faletau Leve's painting 'The Coming of Lotu'

from 'pagan' to 'Christian', but from a discursive history to a figural one. The irony of HMS Royalist being transformed into SS Titus, was not lost on Faletau and he would break into a wry smile at the mention of it. The notion of history as transformation and appropriation was one that he liked. Both Captain Davis and his men, and the arrival of 'lotu' wrought changes on Roviana culture and history, and the image of people arriving from elsewhere is an enduring theme in Roviana history. The actions of the crew of HMS Royalist have a visual history that is accessible to Roviana people, but there are no photographs that adequately depict the arrival of 'lotu' - even in the Methodist archives in Auckland. The photograph that was published in the Methodist Missionary Review showing the "embarkation party on the wharf" is not known in Roviana, nor would it do the work required of a Roviana history of the coming of *lotu*.[4] In the absence of an appropriate image Faletau created one for himself. The Thurston photograph, like the oral histories reproduced above, begins from a single position. That the person behind the camera was the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific is of no interest to Faletau, for him the image shows the arrival of *lotu* from his perspective. Unlike the photograph of the first members of the mission on the verandah that, despite the possibility of alternative readings, retains the perspective of the Methodist 'side', Thurston's photograph is one that Faletau's imagination can appropriate and transform into his own truth. There is a sense of revelation, that surface meanings and appearances are only a starting point for a series of emergent 'truths'. It is an example of what Appadurai has called "visual decolonization".[5]

In his discussion of mimesis amongst bush Kaliai Cargo cults, Lattas has suggested that;

> "people borrowed from the dominant European culture in order to get a foothold in its existence and to get some way of manipulating its hold over them. Copying was not a passive process of mining the dominant hegemonic culture."[6]

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[4] See Australian Methodist Missionary Review July 7 1902
[5] Appadurai 1997 p.6
[6] Lattas 1998 p.123

There is a re-working of European culture here - Faletau has fashioned his own history by 'getting hold' of the photograph. This is the magical power of mimesis and, as Lattas argues; "the colonial and neo-colonial context is made up of a struggle between competing ways of rendering and channelling the creative formative labour of mimesis."[7] For Lattas a more 'traditional' form of mimesis "intrudes" into European rituals and culture giving them a new interpretation.[8] Roviana photographic practices reveal moments of similarity with Euro-American practices, and moments of divergence.

Pinney has argued that there exists;

> "a profound orientation within societies to either discursive closure (eg. through the endless debate about the intentionality of sacred texts), or figurality in which significance is part of an ongoing visual and performative project. Attention is directed not towards a precise interpretive closure, but towards an ongoing performative productivity."[9]

Faletau's photocopy and his painting do things. For Roviana people photography is one way of mediating modernity through the creation of a vernacular practice, but there is a sense in which photography is not 'new' in Roviana - it is connected to previously existing visual and memorial schemes. In Roviana there is an insistence on the materiality of the photo-object, its ability to contain a presence and to function as a relic that can confer a blessing (*tinamanai*). It is bound up with a struggle between discursive and figural tendencies - between Christian texts and the 'word', and earlier corporeal techniques. Faletau's painting concerns the coming of *lotu*, but it is not the word of *lotu* that interests him, rather it is its figural efficacy. The transformation of the photograph is a refiguration of its power. In opposition to Somerville's commanding 'aerial view' of Roviana lagoon that I reproduced in the introduction - a Heideggerean 'world picture'[10] -

[7] ibid p.260
[8] ibid
[9] Pinney 2001 p.166
[10] Heidegger 1977

there is a focus on the 'closeness' of the photograph. As Pinney argues many contemporary post-colonial or neo-colonial photographic practices are;

> "linked by a common concern, not with the space of the photograph as a window on a reality marked by internalised lines of flight, but with the photograph as a surface, a ground, on which presences that look out towards the viewer can be built."[11]

The desire for clarity and "coming out good" in Roviana is underwritten by the reciprocity of vision provided by the photograph. It is hard to separate subjects and objects in Roviana. Objects make demands that cannot be refused.[12] Losche has argued that anthropologists should be wary of the positivist assumption that an object in one society is in any way a clue to the construction of an object in another.[13] The alternative to the binary logic that is involved with assertions that photography has a 'Western metaphysic',[14] is that photography itself has a metaphysic that is specific to its technology. Rather than a metaphysic that is imposed on Roviana, photography involves a technological metaphysic that both 'the West' and Roviana are equally subject to. I have suggested that, as well as differences, there are certain similarities between Roviana and Euro-American vernacular photographic practices. But, I am not arguing that the former in any sense replicate the kinds of late nineteenth century attitudes towards, for example, 'spirit' photography in Europe. Roviana photography does not represent a 'primitive' form from which Euro-American practices have evolved. This study suggests how Euro-American photographies come to resemble those of Roviana, rather than the reverse. I want to argue that notions of materiality and embodiment, although culturally configured in different ways - inflected through particular cultural and historical contexts - are a defining feature of photography. Both practices reveal a widespread corporeality - bodies made of paper and those made of flesh - and this is a constituent of photography's 'savage' identity.

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[11] Pinney n.d. p.20
[12] See Pinney 2001 and Buck-Morss 1992
[13] Losche 1999 p.226
[14] See Weiner 1997

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